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O N
D U E L L I N G A N D G A M I N G.
I N T W O V O L U M E S.

By CHARLES MOORE, M.A.

RECTOR OF CUXTON AND VICAR OF BOUGHTON-BLEAN, KENT;
AND FORMERLY FELLOW OF TRINITY-COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

“ Est luctuosissimum genus mortis, quæ non ex naturâ nec fatalis videtur.”

PLIN. Epist. L. I. xii.

What thou livest

Live well; how long or short, permit to Heaven.

PAR. Lost, B. XI.

V O L. I.

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BY CHARLES MOORE

IN TWO VOLUMES

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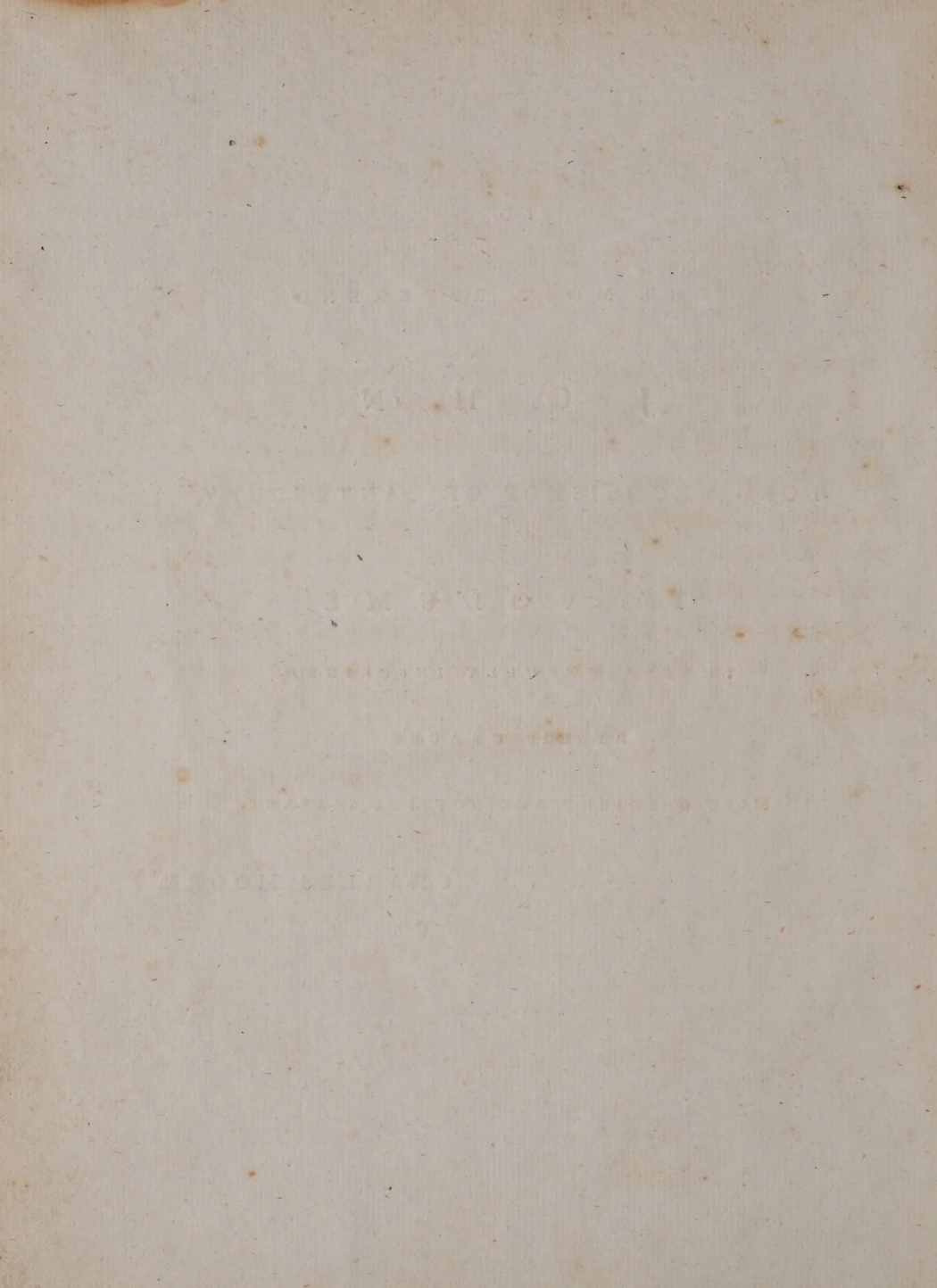
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E N D O F V O L. II.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

THE publication of the following work is not grounded on an expectation, that the hardened sons of dissipation and infidelity will be led to change their opinions and practices, on any thing that may be advanced in these pages; or that the votaries of fashion, with her numerous train of follies and vices, will bow the knee before the throne of reason. These were vain conceits and fond imaginations of the closet, which when bid to go forth and prosper, would quickly return into the breast of their first retainer, because (like the bird of innocence in her flight from the ark) they could find no other resting-place. But it does not follow, that because a man cannot do "all" the good he wishes, he is therefore to sit still, fold his arms [A], and attempt doing "none." The cause of virtue is not to be thus tamely resigned into the hands of her adversaries; neither is corruption, vice, and infidelity to be thus suffered to reign without reprehension, as well as (what a writer cannot help) without control. Such as have strong prepossessions in favour of religion, and are clearly satisfied of her just claims on the conduct of mankind, will not be content to mourn in "private" the decay of her empire, but will boldly attend her "public" service and warfare; and will always be seen at the side of her car, whether it be driving to victory or captivity. Though the greater number therefore of those, who are most materially concerned, will neither regulate their opinions nor practices by the dictates of rational and liberal reproof, yet a conscious rectitude of intention will support a writer under his disappointments of doing good, and will enable him to bear with resignation the contempt of some, the raillery of others, and the indifference of all. Not indeed but that a moral writer may flatter himself with some fruit of his labours, if his labours be at all deserving of the public eye; since though he fails of converting

[A] "I always disapproved (says Paley in his Preface to Moral and Political Philosophy) that fastidious indolence of literary men, which sits still, because it disdains to do "little."

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the professedly and daringly vicious, yet he may reasonably hope to instruct the ignorant, to persuade the wavering, to uphold the weak, to caution the unwary, to guard the avenues through which youth and inexperience must pass, and to confirm and strengthen every previous good inclination to moral and virtuous habits.

In an attempt of this sort, consistent the author trusts with every idea of his professional duty, he hopes to meet with a sort of readers, who will be more ready to enter into the importance of his subjects to the welfare of the community, than to weigh the merits of his composition in the scale of critical accuracy; and who will indulgently pass over many defects in the performance, through a persuasion of the well-meaning and utility of the design. For whoever undertakes to expose and stigmatize the unchristian practice of "Duelling," the ruinous pursuits of "Gaming," and the daring impiety of "Suicide," has some little claim to public indulgence; since these are crimes so great in themselves, so intimately connected with each other, and such increasing evils (particularly the two latter), as to require every nerve to be strained in reprobating their practice.

The author does not presume to entertain a thought of comparing the merits of the present publication with any others that have made their appearance on the same subjects. But as there are various methods of illustrating the same points, some writers pursuing a close and strictly logical style, whilst others fall into a more diffuse and popular mode of arguing; so there are also various sorts of readers, who are all of them equally concerned in moral themes: from whence it follows, that it is neither to be deemed superfluous, nor useless, to make a variety of performances on such subjects public, that so every reader may find something adapted to his own taste and comprehension. It only remains then to lay the general plan of the following work before the reader, in order to enable him to judge for himself, how far it may be likely to suit his taste or merit his perusal.

Though many excellent sermons and short essays have been written on the guilt of suicide, yet it has never been treated (as far as the author's knowledge extends) on a large and comprehensive scale, so as to unite all its several parts
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and branches in one and the same work. The design therefore of the following pages is to collect into one view all that concerns the subject; to consider it on natural, social, moral, and religious grounds; to point out its "general" guilt arising from the distant preparations of the mind for its commission and from its immediate incitements:—its "particular and special" guilt, as being against the impulses of nature; against the authority of God, as our Creator and moral Governor; against the first principles and good order of society in general, and of private connexions in particular; against self-interest both here and hereafter: together with its "great accumulation" of both general and special guilt on the "principles of Christianity." Under all these heads, which will be discussed at large, the usual arguments brought in favour of suicide will be proposed and answered; and the dreadful tendency of its "principle" to overturn every interest of social and domestic happiness will be fully exposed.

The subject will then be taken up on "historic" ground; wherein the opinions, laws, and customs of the "ancients" respecting suicide will be reviewed. The tenets of the different sects of eastern and western philosophers, the opinions of many famous individuals of old times, and the customs of many nations, will be introduced. Roman suicide and the laws of the empire relative to it, will be treated at large. The general causes of ancient suicide will be investigated and exemplified in a variety of instances. Ancient and modern suicide will be compared—to the great disgrace of the latter.

The history of suicide will then be continued through "modern" times; that is, since the establishment of Christianity. It will begin with an account of the principles on which suicide was practised by some Christians, as an act of religion in the first ages of the church. This will be followed by the opinions of the fathers concerning it; by decrees of councils, by general laws provided against it, and by setting forth the usual mode of its punishment in christian countries.—A full account will then be given of the canons, laws, and customs respecting its punishment in England, with a variety of reflections on the same. The particular imputation of suicide on this island will be considered, and its practice in it compared with that of other countries:—many causes also will be assigned, which may be supposed to have given rise to the imputation.

A review

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A review will then follow of the opinions of some "modern" writers in favour of suicide. A full examination will be taken of the work of Dr. Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, called "Biathanatos;" or "an apology for suicide in certain cases upon christian, as well as other grounds." Hume's posthumous essay in its defence will be fully answered. Large strictures will be made on that book of most pernicious influence, called "Sorrows of Werter." The letters of Von Arenswald, a German suicide, will be noticed; and also remarks will be made on some passages both for and against suicide, in the writings of Sir Thomas More, of Montagne, Montesquieu, Beccaria, Robeck the Swede, Rousseau, Voltaire, and others.

Observations will be added through the work relative to many miscellaneous points connected with the subject. Among other things, the nature of the "courage," which is asserted by some to accompany suicide, will be inquired into; and also its frequent connexion with certain points of "modern honour;" such as "duelling and the discharge of gambling debts;" which will lead to a discussion of these two subjects, which are so intimately connected with suicide, as to form the triple-head of a Cerberus, which it were well could it be decollated at one stroke. But the whole compass of the work on suicide will first be briefly recapitulated; and such cautions and preservatives will be proposed, as seem best calculated to prevent all temptation to its commission.

In the Treatise on Duelling an inquiry will be made into the history of the "ancient" duel or judicial combat; its rise, progress, variations, and laws. The nature and grounds of the "modern" duel will next be laid open; and its causes of reprehension unfolded. The duellist will then enter on his own defence, to which a full reply will be given. Many remarks will be interspersed on points connected with the subject; and after having exposed the cruelty, the injustice, and irreligion of the duel, together with its near approximation to the crime of self-murder, the whole will be referred to the good sense and judgment of the "Military Order," (who alone can give energy to its reprobation) to contrive some method of abolishing so blood-thirsty and lawless a custom;—a custom so strongly tinctured with the barbarity and ignorance of those Gothic ages, which gave it birth.

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In the Treatise on "Gaming" will be introduced;—the ancient and modern definitions of "play;"—and inquiry will be made into its nature and sources. The universality of the passion for gaming will be traced through the globe; when it will be found to have uniformly existed among ancient and modern nations, among savages and civilized people; and its desperate effects to have been similar in all parts of the world: as also that it is the foible or vice of great as well as little minds.—An historic account will next be given of the antiquity and progress of the three most distinguished methods of gambling, viz. dice, horse-racing, and cards:—the origin of all these will be traced, and their progress through different countries be noticed. The distinction between games of skill and games of chance will be touched on; and a brief account be added of the origin and progress of the game of chess, as being a game of pure skill, which has maintained its honour unimpeached through a succession of ages, without having ever contributed to the ruin of its admirers and practitioners.—It will then be shown, that though there is no real difference in the character of a gamester, and though the effects are ultimately the same on all, viz. ruin and destruction; yet that those effects are diversified in their progress, according to the situation in life of its votary. The sharper's character will first be laid open; and this will be followed by some account of the commercial gambler, the female gambler, and the gambler of distinction. The whole will be interspersed with a variety of remarks relative to lotteries, stock-jobbing, Newmarket, and many other incidental points. The evil effects of gambling will be displayed, and the frequency of its conclusion in the rage of self-murder be deplored. Some remedies also will be proposed against its excessive pursuit, though it must be confessed with small hopes of success, while the levity of fashion prevails against all sense and reason. An invocation to reason, as improved by revelation, "that we may be taught by their united aid, how to win the invaluable stake of "everlasting happiness," against all "the deceits and illusive tricks of folly and fashion"—concludes the whole.

Such then being the substance, and so comprehensive the scale, it must serve as an apology for the length of the work; which, without a material alteration of the plan, could not well be comprised in a much less compass. The author however is aware of an objection, which will here be started, "that the work "being swelled to such a size will be little, if at all, read, and especially by those
" most

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“ most interested in its perusal.” This indeed may be too true; but it is a consequence against which no moral writer can provide, who wishes to take a comprehensive view of his subject, and who is willing not merely to skim over the surface, but to dive deep into the stream. Neither is it more applicable to the present than to all other moral and religious essays, which are least likely to be read by those, for whose benefit they are chiefly designed. Yet it is very strange (and may be reckoned among the fatal insensibilities of the present age), that persons, who are apt to hold themselves above conviction, and are not to be influenced by argument, do notwithstanding eagerly read by way of amusement (but without feeling shame or remorse) what perhaps highly reproaches themselves [B]; but what they never think of applying to their own conduct, or of suffering to influence their own practice: this is become a striking trait of the times, as well as a proof of their great degeneracy.—But what number of readers soever (or of what kind soever they may be who) may fall to the share of the present writer, he presumes to lay before the public, not only a full account of the impiety of suicide, as an immoral and irreligious action, but also to enlarge on its history, and to discuss its points of controversy: and in these latter fields of inquiry many possibly who have never turned their thoughts towards the subject, may find a degree of information and amusement, even if they have no occasion for, or refuse, to profit by, the points of moral discussion.—The author likewise has a further view in instituting so copious an inquiry, which is, that his reader may find all that he wishes to know on the subject of suicide, its branches and dependencies, comprised in one work, without being under a necessity of applying to a variety of writers. He has also taken a complete rather than a partial review, as being actuated by a sincere and humble hope, that since not only the profligate and the frantic, but the “ good and the reasoning” (persons, who seem to have “ thought” a great deal of the matter, before they have taken up the dire resolution) are too often found among those, who avail themselves of this desperate resource, some real benefit might be derived from such a comprehensive notice; and that possibly by giving so full an attention to the argumentative vindications, by which writers ancient or modern

[B] A striking instance of this has occurred of late in the avidity with which that incomparable little volume called “ Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to general Society”—has been read by all ranks:—yet who thinks of applying its most excellent observations and strictures to “ himself;” or of asking himself the important question—“ Am I the man?”

have

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have countenanced and diffused the mischievous example, the “good and the reasoning” may be drawn in to read, if the vicious and profligate will not.—This also seems more especially necessary to be done in these days, when either the want of all principle, or the subtle refinements of false principles, have rendered that dreadful topic of a questionable nature in the opinion of many; whence its prevalence is not only become so very common, but also so very commonly justified; being insidiously recommended by a show of argument, as well as lessened in its horror by the more than indifference, even the indulgence and favour, with which these fatal catastrophes are treated.—Though the author does not pretend to have gleaned “all” that is interspersed in the writings of ancients or moderns, either in behalf of suicide or against it (since such a task would have been as laborious to himself, as unpleasant and useless to his reader) yet he trusts that he has omitted no material argument on either side, or neglected any writers on the subject, who have come within his knowledge. But omissions of this sort may be more easily pardoned, when it is considered, how similar are all the arguments that have been used by the favourers of suicide from the days of Seneca, the noted panegyrist of stoical suicide, to our own;—that they are only a repetition of one and the same thing under various shapes and disguises, as will be readily acknowledged on their inspection hereafter.

With respect to the historical and controversial parts, the author has generally given the requisite quotations at length, in order to prevent a necessity of recourse to a variety of writers, whose works might not always be at hand for consultation. He has likewise translated most of the passages (without always deeming it necessary to give the original at length), that the text might flow on without breaks or interruptions to the less learned reader. The classical one will be able to judge for himself of the faithfulness of the translations; and others, it is to be hoped, will take them on the credit of the author.—In examining the works of different writers in favour of suicide, a repetition of the same arguments and their answers has been often unavoidable, and therefore, it is trusted, will meet with excuse.

It may not be improper to premise a few more circumstances relative to what the reader is to expect in the following pages. In the first place, the author has cautiously avoided a mention of any particular individuals, who have of

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late years fallen victims to despair and suicide. This may be deemed a weighty omission by those, who rejoice above all things in "private anecdote;" but an unwillingness to rouse painful sensations in the breasts of survivors will be more than a sufficient apology with the humane reader. The aim has been to reprobate the crime in general terms, without attacking the memory of its wretched perpetrator. But the author is free to attack and censure in the most pointed terms, such injudicious and mischievous publications, in which it has been endeavoured by false and specious glosses, to lessen our horror at the crime in any particular instance of its commission, where no such indulgence was merited; but in which publications these dangerous encomiasts would fain make their hero's foibles and follies and vices slide into virtues, or something very like them: and though a criminal indulgence of their passions was the manifest cause of their suicide, yet would endeavour to obscure our just abhorrence of vice and love of virtue, under the deceitful covering of indiscriminate sensibility and compassion. Such glossers of vice deserve the severest reprehension, and cannot be too much exposed to shame and infamy.

With respect to the general course of arguments used against suicide, the author has not sought to draw them from deep and metaphysical researches into the abstract nature of man, but has deemed those to be most important, which are most plain and obvious to all capacities: for which reason he has proceeded on that common, but just, distinction of our duty "to God, our neighbour, and ourselves." If the suicide can maintain his ground against the duties arising from these situations and interests, he has nothing to fear from more abstruse arguments; but if he fail here, it is not the most acute subtilty of metaphysical reasoning that will defend him. The principles of moral duty, being founded on plain and common sense, and being calculated for general and vulgar use, are better illustrated by familiar arguments than by the abstract deductions of metaphysical inquiry. Hence however some difficulty arises to a moral writer in these latter days, how he shall guide his pen in enlarging on any moral subject. If he pass by all common arguments, as having no charms of novelty to recommend them, he probably omits the most powerful considerations that can be advanced to establish the point in view;—if he expatiate on such, as being most to his purpose, it will be difficult to escape the charge of plagiarism. All then that remains for him to do is to form new arrangements of old ideas,

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to clothe them in new language, and to endeavour to make up in precision and perspicuity, whatever he may seem to want in originality : and thus perhaps he may be able to gain some credit by the adoption, where he could have none from the birth.

A number of quotations and notes are dispersed through the work, some to illustrate, and others to enliven, the serious business in hand ; and with regard to these, the author has not observed a scrupulous uniformity ; having sometimes given them in their original language, at others in a translation either of his own or another's, as seemed best to himself.

There seems nothing else to be noticed in this place ; only, that as the time is arrived in which the labours of his retirement are to be submitted to the eye of public observation, the author feels many an uneasy and anxious sensation for the judgment that awaits him. This is further increased, lest his performance should not be found worthy of the countenance of those honourable and respectable personages, who have condescended to patronise its publication by the credit of their names ; and to whom he here offers his grateful acknowledgments.—But his best confidence is in the serious importance of his subject, which he trusts will compensate for many a failure in its mode of execution ; since where the design is well-meant, the public are ever ready to decide with candour and indulgence.—Could the author but be justified in forming the pleasing hope, that one profligate and thoughtless liver might ever be brought to such a sense of his duty to God and such an awe of futurity, as to be convinced of the heinous guilt of suicide ;—or that one apt to indulge in a train of melancholic ideas could be persuaded into a complacency with life, and be deterred from lifting his arm against himself—“ by any thing that was advanced in the following pages,”—he should deem it the richest compensation and fruit of all his labour !—May the Almighty bestow such a blessing on his earnest endeavours, as may tend to accomplish so desirable an end !

A F U L L

FULL INQUIRY

INTO THE SUBJECT OF

SUICIDE, &c.

PART I.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF SUICIDE, TENDING TO
ESTABLISH ITS GENERAL GUILT.

CHAP. I.

On the term Suicide, and its different acceptations.—Applied both to the action and to the agent.—Signifies “self-killing.”—Though in strictness applicable to every one, who voluntarily shortens his own life by any means whatever, yet to be confined in this inquiry to the procuring an immediate self-destruction by some method of violence.—Suicide an increasing evil.—Its guilt being great, where guilty at all, makes it necessary (as far as it can be done) to distinguish between its criminal or innocent commission.—Its commission does not always imply guilt.—Killing not always murder.—Lunacy, violent depression of spirits approaching towards it.—The position, (however humane) which ascribes all suicide to madness, not to be justified.—The inquiry never made concerning the guilt or innocence of suicide in

itself, but only whether lunacy can be proved to excuse it?—Though suicide, when at all imputable, is always most highly censurable, yet there may be degrees of its guilt.—Some general inducements to suicide mentioned, not founded on any previous guilt in the perpetrator.—Other inducements from previous guilt.—Some are defenders of its practice, and write, and argue in its favour; (these are most pernicious members of society.)—The proportion of guilt not equal in all suicides.—Man not able to decide with precision on each particular case, which must be left to an all-righteous and discerning Judge.—Human strictures, like human laws, must be general.—Short summary of what is to be proved in the argumentative part of the following work.

THE term "Suicide" is in general applied both to the action and to the agent; so that a person is said either to have committed suicide, or to have been a suicide. It is a compound [A] term, signifying "a man's killing himself;" and in strictness is applicable to every one, who in any shape voluntarily shortens the period of his own life. But as life may be shortened by a variety of means, it is necessary to make some distinction in the application of the term, so as to confine its extended meaning to that limited sense, in which it is generally understood, and in which it is designed to be used in the following inquiry. Though therefore a person may either curtail the period of his mortal existence, by pursuing some general line of conduct, (be it either laudable or vicious,) which gradually tends to accelerate his end, or may hazard his immediate dissolution, by some action or undertaking extremely perilous; though in both cases he may be said to hasten his own end, (and thereby to become in some measure a suicide), yet this being rather an unavoidable consequence of some other action, than a primary intention or even wish of its author, is not the object of the present discussion. The following observations are meant to be confined to that species of self-destruction alone, which proceeds immediately and voluntarily, without other view or design, to compass its end, by using

[A] Sui cædes.—The word "Suicism" has been used by some few writers to express the action itself; but this seems to convey no determinate meaning, as it drops the most material part of the compound term. If it were necessary to frame a new word of this kind, the author conceives it should rather be "Suicidism" than "Suicism."—However, no innovation of words has been attempted in the following work, as it appeared unnecessary.

forcible,

forcible and violent means to get rid of life. Indeed, though such an indulgence of the passions, or such a gratification of vicious and abandoned habits, as tends to impair the human constitution, to sap the vitals of health and strength, and, after endangering life at all times, ultimately to bring its votaries to accelerated and untimely ends; though such a line of conduct be in a moral light a most guilty species of suicide, yet it would be deviating too wide of the mark, to enter into its discussion any further, than as such a course of life is so often found to terminate in actual self-murder. But as of all vicious and evil habits, "Gaming" is the most frequent promoter of desperate suicide; gaming shall not pass unnoticed hereafter. There is also another kind of suicide, (for such it must be called) which is frequently and instantaneously brought on, by complying with the impulses of modern honour, in the hazard of the "Duel." Here, indeed, the act of destruction (when death ensues) is performed by the hands of another; but its danger being promoted, or at least voluntarily submitted to by the person himself,—how great soever the crime of self-murder may be, (and great it certainly will be found) a large portion of its guilt must be imputed to himself. The unchristian practice of duelling indeed approaches so near to that immediate and actual suicide, which is to make the subject of the following pages, that it might be deemed an omission not to enter on its consideration in a proper place.

But the species of suicide, which is to engage our present attention, deviates so widely from the first principles of human nature, that fortified, as mankind are, by the strong and prevalent impulses of self-love and self-preservation, one should think all enlargement on the subject would be needless, as well as all caution against its commission futile and nugatory. However, experience too well justifies the necessity of the notice, and the particular temper of the times, so fraught with dissipation and infidelity, leads to a dread, that it is yet an increasing evil. How luxurious habits of life, light notions of virtue, and unsteady, or rather no principles at all of religion, tend to promote frequent suicide, will be explained hereafter. In the mean time, as it may be confidently asserted, (on the strength of what will soon be proved) that its commission implies an heinous offence against the providence and moral government of the Deity, the good order and happiness of society, and a man's most important self-interests, it is but common justice previously to distinguish, as clearly as may

be, between those, who deserve its worst imputation, or only a share of it, or none at all.

There are points then to be settled, and exceptions to be made, previous to a general charge of guilt on all, who put a sudden end to their own lives. For though every person, who terminates his mortal existence by his own hand, commits suicide, yet he does not, therefore, always commit murder, which alone constitutes its guilt. Some distinction is necessary, in regard to a man's killing himself, as it would be had he killed another person; which latter he may do, either inadvertently or legally, and therefore in either case innocently, and without the imputation of being the murderer of another. When a man kills himself inadvertently and involuntarily, it comes under the legal description of accidental death, or per infortunium; but as to his doing it legally, the law allows of no such case. The only instance of innocence, which it allows to the commission of voluntary suicide, is in the case of madness; when a man being deemed under no moral guidance, can be subject to no imputation of guilt on account of his behaviour either to himself or others. But it may be remarked, in order to impress the greater horror of what is really self-murder, that one species of confirmed madness, the turbulent and frantic, is seldom known to stain its hands in its own blood; but to employ all the cunning and mischievous imagination, of which it is master, to the harm and destruction of others: still seeming, under this deprivation of reason, to be guided by the same regard for self-preservation, as actuates all other wild and irrational animals. But there is another species of madness, the dejected and melancholic, which, preying more inwardly on itself, is more frequently productive of self-destruction. When this wretched depression of spirits holds a confirmed and established empire over the human mind, it becomes an acknowledged and permanent madness; and the unhappy object is no longer liable to moral imputation. Such an one often proves more harmless to others than to himself, since many are the suicides committed by this miserable description of men.

But some, who are ever desirous of leaning toward the side of humanity, are inclined to judge, that the very act of suicide (being so horrid and unnatural) implies a subversion of the brain, or a species of madness. This[B], however,

[B] See chap. ii. part v. where the matter of insanity is fully considered, and found to be admitted too indiscriminately.

is deciding too favourably of the matter, as will appear in the prosecution of the subject. In all cases, however, the heinousness of self-murder (when it is proper to call it so) is sufficiently acknowledged, because the question never is put concerning its intrinsic guilt or innocence, but whether "insanity," and that alone, can be proved to ward off all imputableness of moral agency? The act of suicide, then, to be wholly void of guilt, or to be legally deemed so, must proceed from an involuntary insanity. It is necessary to add involuntary, because a temporary fit of phrensy, occasioned by the distraction of furious passions, does not excuse it; since, if these distractions themselves are highly culpable, and might have been avoided, whatever is unlawfully done under such commotions of the brain, is liable to the imputation of guilt. The law neither excuses the outrages of intoxication, nor the excess of that rage, which impels to murder.

But yet an equal share of censure is scarcely due to every perpetrator, even of the most voluntary suicide; since the proportion of its guilt must depend on the circumstances of the case. One commits it, acknowledging its offence, and praying for pardon; but, being of a weak frame and constitution of body and mind, is overwhelmed by his misfortunes. Another persuades himself into an idea of his own unimportance to society, and therefore, with a solemn address to God to receive him, seeks to free himself from all present and future trouble. This man rushes on his own life without reflection, moved by some sudden impulse of vexation and disappointment, goading an impetuous and agitated mind, which at other times has been seriously and virtuously inclined: that embraces suicide, as the result of a cool and deliberate judgment, weighing, however, its own calamities through a false and magnifying medium. The female flies to it, as her sure refuge from shame and infidelity, in the disappointments and jealousies of love, and lays the guilt of her death at the door of perjured man. In short, unmerited misfortunes, unavoidable poverty, misery and affliction, the cutting ingratitude of friends, the base desertion of relatives, are all, in their turn, productive of suicide: but not being founded on previous guilt in the perpetrator, tend to excite some degree of compassion for the agent, in the midst of an abhorrence of the action.

Again; one man thinks not at all of a future state, or of the moral government of God; but in a moment of disappointed lust, ambition, or avarice, fills
up

up the measure of his crimes by rushing on eternity; whilst another philosophically or metaphysically arguing in defence of the practice against all moral and religious sentiment, either like Robeck calmly [c] reduces his theory into practice, (thus at least showing its influence over himself); or like Hume dies the common death of all men, and leaves [d] a defence of suicide behind him, to be added to his other sceptical performances, for the benefit of his own and future ages. Is there an equality of guilt in all these cases? Is its simple, and even sinful commission, equal to its justification? Shall those unhappy victims at the altar of suicide, who have sacrificed themselves on the decision of a weak and erroneous judgment rather than in defiance of human and divine laws, be placed on the same level of guilt with those, who, by the perpetration of self-murder, have completed a life of vice and wickedness? Or with those, who attempt to abate its horror, and to make it a matter of choice, of indifference, nay, even of good report, and who, in short, aim at defending its principle [e], by a display of deceitful sophistry? forbid its humanity. Errors of judgment may be overlooked and forgiven; the careless and thoughtless practitioners of evil fall into the hands of a merciful judge; but the public defenders and justifiers of a wicked action, have all those miserable and pernicious consequences to answer for, which a divulgement of their principles may, at any time, produce. An impetuous and perturbed mind, may hastily rush on action, which it neither approves nor would wish to defend; but the calm and cool reasoner in justification of suicide strikes a dagger at the heart of every civil and domestic connexion, as well as destroys the principles of all moral obligation and religious duty. The philosophic suicide, therefore, (that is, one who maintains its innocence and legality in his writings, whether he practises it or not on himself) like the deliberate murderer, is entitled to a double portion of censure and abhorrence. However then, there can be no assignable cause, which can render voluntary suicide lawful, and void of all criminality, yet there may be pallia-

[c] Robeck a Swede, wrote a large and dispassionate volume in defence of suicide; and when he had concluded, according to his own principles, that it was lawful to put an end to his life, he destroyed himself. See an account of him in Part VI. chap. iii.

[d] See for Hume's posthumous Essay on Suicide, in Part VI. chap. ii.

[e] For the horrid consequences which arise to society from defending its principle, see Part II. chap. iii.

tions, as well as aggravations, of its guilt; cases that may be pitiable, though not perfectly innocent: consequently it is not to be concluded with the rigid casuist, "that all its instances are equally unpardonable, because there can be no repentance." God forbid that man should thus attempt to limit the mercies of the Almighty, in a matter in which it is impossible to exhibit any signs of repentance! It is difficult and impracticable for man to attempt a judgment of the precise degree of guilt which is contracted by any particular suicide; but there is room for perfect assurance, that the great Judge of all the world will execute righteousness in mercy, and that He will assign a punishment for this, as well as for all other crimes, alone proportioned to the degree of its guilt.

Human laws can only judge of facts: consequently, every perpetrator of suicide, who is not proved a lunatic, (which is the only legal exception) must, in the eye of civil justice, be deemed equally guilty. But the determinations of moral law are founded on the motives producing any action; and therefore, as the motives which lead to suicide, may be very dissimilar, there arises from hence (as in all other breaches of morality) a great variation, as well as disproportion, in the measure of the guilt. All strictures, however, on this subject, (like the decisions of law) must be conceived in general terms; but the application must vary with the case. It will be proved then, in the following inquiry, that self-murder must be deemed a cowardly act, as being so frequently the result of a mean despair; a criminal one to the community at large, as it militates against the first principles of society;—base to our private connexions, as it insults their tenderest feelings;—injurious to ourselves, as it puts an end to all our interests here, and much hazards them hereafter;—sinful and rebellious, as it struggles against, and seeks to overturn the dispensations and appointments of Providence;—in a word, to use an old, but clear and comprehensive distinction, that it is a great breach of duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. But before we proceed to confirm these "special" charges against suicide, it may be proper to point out certain causes, which tend to establish its "general" guilt.

C H A P. II.

Suicide arises from too strong an impression made on the mind: and is grounded either on the want of all principle, or on too great a refinement of principle; from the former proceeds a sudden and outrageous; from the latter, a more deliberate and reasoning kind of suicide—Design of this chapter to trace those “distant causes,” which chiefly prepare the mind for the commission of the former.—Mode of education defective; being employed in forming the external manners more than in improving the heart.—From whence proceeds an inattention to moral character and laudable pursuits; because so little distinction made in public notice between moral and immoral men.—No spur to virtuous emulation.—Indolence succeeds, which degenerates into effeminacy and luxury.—The effects of luxury on the body and mind. Its evil consequences.—Passions unrestrained no friends to seriousness, virtue, and religion.—Are easily persuaded by the weakest sophistry into a disbelief of every thing that thwarts their pursuits.—Such writings eagerly read, as paint vice under amiable colours, and treat lightly of futurity.—Under the direction of such sophists (added to a course of luxurious dissipation) the mind is “prepared” for an impatience under all disappointment and trouble, which so frequently ends in the outrage of self-murder in its due time.

SUICIDE in general may be conceived to arise from a too strong impression made on the mind; which impression owes the excess of its energy either to the want of “all” good principle, or to such a great “refinement” of principle, as leads to false and pernicious conclusions. For as to that species of self-destruction, which arises from a confirmed melancholy, as it partakes more of a disease than a crime, it falls under the head of commiseration rather than censure. From a want of all serious principle, of all consideration [F] and reflection, chiefly arises that outrageous kind of suicide, by which a man instantly despatches himself in passion and fury, rather than he will bear disappointments and troubles. From a fallacious refinement of principle proceeds that more cool and deliberate sort of self-murder, concerning which a man has

[F] “Because they never think of death, they die.”——YOUNG’S Night Thoughts.

previously argued with himself, and determined, that he neither can nor ought to live under such or such circumstances; being influenced in this judgment by a sense of false shame, false pride, or false honour. As the one therefore is void of all principle, so the other wants all solidity of principle; and the failure in both seems to derive its origin from the same source, namely, a want of serious and religious culture in early life.

It is designed in the present chapter to trace the distant causes, which prepare the mind for the commission of outrageous and desperate suicide in due time; that is, for such as proceeds from a want of all principle or sense of what is serious and good, and which so frequently forms the conclusion of a vicious and abandoned course of life. The other sort will have a large attention paid to it hereafter in various shapes; such as, in pointing out some particular refinements of principle, which lead to these fallacious conclusions; in answering the general arguments adduced in favour of suicide; in reviewing the works of writers in its defence; and in delineating the characters of certain persons, who have been led to its commission, on the strength, or rather weakness, of these refinements of principle.

Suicide is an action of so much horror in itself, and so subversive of the first regards of human nature, that one should wonder, how any thing less than a real insanity could lead to its perpetration. But when the matter is traced to the fountain-head [c], it will be found, that however surprising and sudden it may seem, it is usually (and especially when preceded by a vicious course of life) the result of a combination of causes, some of which prepare the mind for its future commission, whilst others determine its immediate execution: the former shall be examined in this place.

There is little room to doubt, but that the present mode of education tends much, through a chain of dependent causes and effects, to prepare the mind in due time for the perpetration of self-murder. The ornamental parts of education daily gain ground on the substantial; the showy and the specious on the

[c] "But thou be shock'd, while I detect the cause

"Of self-assault, expose the monster's birth,

"And bid abhorrence hiss it round the world."——YOUNG, Night V.

solid and virtuous. The endowments of the mind and cultivation of the heart are forced to yield to the external accomplishments and graces of the body, and polished manners are too generally preferred to sound morals. The importance of fashion is inculcated in opposition to reason; religion is made to bow down before the shrine of honour, and the fear of the world is taught to supersede the fear of God. But what superstructure can be raised on so sandy a foundation? It can support no incumbent weight, and in consequence it cannot be deemed surprising, that an inundation of folly and vice, like a sweeping torrent, should bear down all before it. The dignity of personal worth and character is a point on which too little attention or encouragement is bestowed. Brilliant parts, which are mere gifts of nature, not acquisitions of application and industry, (and in which therefore there is not the least shadow of intrinsic merit) supersede sound judgment and wisdom in public [H] estimation; while the very idea of disinterested virtue, integrity, and public spirit, is almost every where ridiculed and laughed out of countenance. When a whole nation, impelled by the force of general corruption, is immersed in voluptuousness, what must become of the interests of personal good character? Where the vanity of dress, of title, of expence, and gaudy show assumes an unbounded [I] control, the conscious dignity and pride of virtue is no more. Hence the spur of emulation is wanting to excite to the practice of whatever is great, noble and virtuous; since the uncertain prospect of encouragement, or even of cold approbation, is little calculated to call forth the powers and energy of the soul into useful and honourable exertion. A vacuity succeeds in the mind, which however quickly yields to the intrusion of every light and trivial object; to an effeminacy [K] of manners, a frivolity of conduct, and to a swollen tide of profuse and profligate habits. The gratifications of unbounded luxury are productive of the most pernicious and fatal effects. The sensual liver is the mere slave of his passions, which, like froward children, daily multiply their demands upon him, and will bear no denial. His feelings, indeed, may be sometimes quickened, but they are the feelings of wild passion alone, which begin, which center, and which end in self. No sensibility can the follower of dissipation and luxury show for the pains and afflictions of others,

[H] Satis eloquentiae, sapientiae parum.——SALL. CAT.

[I] Si libido possidet, ea dominatur; animus nihil valet.——SALL. CAT.

[K] Viros pati muliebria.——SALL. CAT.

neither can his soul rise to the exertion of friendly [L], social, or public virtue, when it stands in competition with private gratification. Profuse in the midst of public want, he carouses in the hour of public [M] ruin. The concerns of pleasure are alone important, and the discoverer of a new mode of dissipation is in his eye the most [N] useful member of society. Prodigal of his [O] own, he covets the wealth of others, since no two vices are more intimately united than luxury and avarice. In a word, (for it would be needless to dive deeper into the abyss of dissipation) luxury tends in all shapes to enervate the body and to depress the faculties of the soul; to deprave the morals and to corrupt the heart: and when the heart of man is become corrupt, it teems with an abundance [P] of evil.

But

[L] Cato the elder used to say, that there could be no friendship in a man, whose palate had quicker sensations than his brain or heart.—See his life in Plutarch.

[M] ————— Non ita Romuli

Præscriptum & intonsi Catonis

Auspiciis veterumque normâ.

Privatus illis census erat brevis,

Commune magnum.—HOR. Lib. II. Od. xv.

[N] The Persian kings offered great rewards to the discoverers of a new pleasure, or a new dish.—See Athenæus, Lib. XII. and Val. Max. Lib. IX. c. i.

—Dux vitæ—Dia voluptas, says Lucretius, Lib. II.

[O] Alieni appetens, sui profusus.—SALL.

Luxuria & avaritia are perpetually joined by Sallust.

[P] The effects of luxury are so similar in every age and nation, that when we read Sallust, Juvenal, Tacitus, Athenæus and others, it is impossible not to apply almost every reflection of these writers to our own times and experience. The turning night into day, and day into night, the desertion of the country to live in a crowd, and thereby avoid habits of reflection, is no new or modern invention of luxury. Athenæus (Lib. VI. p. 273) mentions it as the boast of some Sybarites and others, that they had not seen the sun rise or set for twenty years together. Varro (De Re Rusticâ, Lib. II.) writes thus. “Igitur quod nunc “intra murum” ferè patresfamilie correpserunt, relictis falce & aratro, & manus movere maluerunt in theatro ac circo quàm in fegetibus ac vinetis.” And Columella also (De Re Rusticâ, Lib. I.) says, “Omnes enim (sicut M. Varro jam temporibus avorum conquestus est) patresfamilie falce ac aratro relictis, intra murum correpimus, & in circis potius ac theatris quàm in fegetibus ac vinetis manus movemus: attonitique miramur gestus effeminatorum, quòd a naturâ sexum viris dene-gatum, muliebri motu mentiantur decipiantque oculos spectantium. Noctes libidinibus & ebrietatibus, dies ludo vel somno consumimus. Ac nosmetipsos ducimus fortunatos, quod nec orientem solem videmus nec occidentem: itaque istam vitam socordem persequitur valetudo. Nam sic juvenum corpora fluxa & resoluta sunt, ut nihil mors mutatura videatur.”—But among ancient nations the palm of

luxurious

But the powers of the understanding, and all its resources of internal enjoyment, were given to control the violence of the passions and grosser appetites. When these powers therefore are dissolved in habits of indolence and luxury, are impaired and depressed by perpetual dissipation, there is neither room nor inclination left for such an exertion. The man, whose soul is unhinged by the fascinations of perpetual gaiety and pleasure, never seeks satisfaction in mental resources, because indeed he has none such within him. For how should the understanding be capable of relishing internal delights, or the heart be fruitful of liberal, noble, or virtuous sentiments, without previous attention and cultivation [Q.]? Where this has been wanting, there must needs be a wild vacuity within, which will render the mind unable to contribute its proportion of enjoyments, or to maintain its due degree of superiority. This being the case, the passions must of course predominate, and lead their possessor captive at will. Now the passions, it is well known, are no friends to serious thinking, virtue or religion. Reflection through their means is soon drowned in the rapid current of pleasure, sober thoughts are not suffered to intrude, prudence is despised, reason banished, and the suggestions of conscience stifled in the birth. Under such an influence should the mind ever make a faint effort to exert its rational faculties, it becomes easily biassed in all its opinions by the instigation of sensual appetites and worldly interests; coinciding with which the weakest sophistry takes place of sound reason, judgment and truth.

luxurious effeminacy is generally bestowed on the Sybaritæ, who flourished during the infancy of Rome in the part of Italy now called Calabria. To such a pitch of effeminacy had they arrived, (as Athenæus reports, Lib. XII.) that they would not suffer blacksmiths or carpenters, or any noisy tradesmen to live in their city, lest their sleep should ever perchance be broken by them: and for the same reason they banished cocks likewise—those early disturbers. Seneca also mentions (Lib. II. c. xxv. de Irâ) one Mendycides, a citizen of Sybaris, who was so fatigued at “seeing” another man dig, that he ordered no such work ever to be performed in his presence. The same man often complained, because on his bed of roses some of the leaves would get doubled under him, and disturb his rest. “Where pleasure (adds Seneca) has corrupted both soul and body, there nothing can be endured, not because of the severity, but the softness of the sufferance.”

[Q.] It was a shrewd observation of a good old writer, (author of the Book of Wisdom) “How can he get wisdom, whose talk is of bullocks?” But rusticity is not more an enemy to knowledge than effeminacy. With the same propriety, therefore, it may now be asked, “How can he get wisdom, whose talk is of drefs, of wagers, of cards, of borough-jobbing, horses, women and dice.”—*Estimate of Manners*, vol. i. p. 74.

But

But the profligate and luxurious man, who is a prey to his gross appetites and passions, can scarce with such opinions and systems to be true, as admit a ruling Providence and a day of future account. Better to such an one are the gloomy thoughts of annihilation after death, than all the joys and blessings of heaven; better to lie down for ever in the silent grave than to cherish any hopes of life and immortality. His prospects of futurity are so obscured and clouded by his libertine conduct, that to him there can be no comfort in the view. He will not throw off his disorderly habits, but he gladly shrinks, as far as ever he can, from all notions of virtue, Providence, and a future state of retribution. He shuts his eyes against the light of argument and truth, and what he takes pains not to see himself (being blinded by error and vice) he is unwilling to believe can be manifest to another. How greedily, therefore, does he devour such pernicious writings, of which there are plenty to be found, as sap the very foundations of virtue by painting vice in amiable colours; as harbour the most delusive and pernicious conceits under a confused application of some honourable terms; as affect to unite the ideas of sensibility and generous feelings with (what they truly abhor) the most direct deviations from the plainest duties of common life; such as make duelling honourable, adultery specious, and suicide lawful! Thus with a good inclination to throw down all the barriers between virtue and vice; with an hearty wish, that the elegancies of the latter (as they are termed) may prevail over the dull substance (as it is called) of the former; and with a mind afloat as to all solid principles, the dissipated character is ripening apace for the advantageous perusal of all sceptical and atheistical performances; which, under familiar and popular titles, and clothed in fascinating language, attempt underhand to explain away the moral government, if not the very existence of a Deity; and thus kindly "to free us from the pain of superstition [R], that "we may sleep quietly in our beds." These minute philosophers would fain vindicate man to what they call the free use of his natural liberty; that is, to do whatever he pleases during life, and to live only as long as he pleases. Under the direction of such kind and ingenious instructors, a man of unstable principles is soon bewildered in all the mazes of scepticism and infidelity; his heart becomes callous, his conscience is seared, and his taste is too refined to be any longer a dupe

———"To all the nurse and all the priest have taught"——

[R]. See Hume's Essay on Suicide, considered in Part VI. c. 2.

of

of the punishments of futurity. By these means the soul is gradually "prepared" for any act of rebellion against its Maker, which any worldly pursuit or disposition of mind may lead it to commit. The occasion, indeed, may not yet be ripened, which impels to immediate suicide: but where the habit of sensual indulgence has been strong and uniform, that of enduring pain or trouble is weakened in proportion. The mind also, by having thrown aside all influence of religious fear, is unhinged to every thing serious, as well as unable to bear any thing grievous; and is therefore ready to receive and cherish such murderous suggestions, whenever the moment of disappointment, anguish and despair arrives.

Thus a light and frivolous education leads (as has been seen) to a vacuity of serious thoughts and solid principles of conduct. The want of these necessarily introduces a love of trivial pursuits, an habit of dissipation, and luxurious modes of living. These, in their turn, inflame the passions, weaken the powers of the understanding, deprave the morals, and corrupt the heart. Hence follows an unbounded sway of the sensual appetites, which naturally exclude whatever would resist their own lawless dominion. Patience, therefore, and submission and self-denial, together with all virtuous and religious impressions both in principle and practice, are quickly stifled. Works of seriousness and improvement are thrown aside, while the writings of minute philosophers, of sceptics and infidels, are read with avidity and implicit credit. Their flimsy method of arguing, their absurd and dangerous conceits, and false conclusions, are adapted to the weakness of their readers' judgments. They humour their depraved inclinations, and flatter the wild tyranny of their passions; to which what can be more agreeable and convincing than the insinuations, that nothing is to be feared hereafter, that soul and body probably perish together, that man dies like a dog, and therefore may live like one! Hence the wretched remnants of reason, in such devoted victims to pleasure, are easily induced to argue in behalf of infidelity, and against a future day of account: and when the fear of God is thus cast off, the mind is duly "prepared and qualified" for the outrage of self-murder, whenever the burden of life sits heavy upon it, and the moment of despair arrives. Thus

"A sensual unreflecting life is big

"With monstrous births and suicide to crown

"The black, infernal brood." — YOUNG, Night V.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

Many circumstances contribute to check the career of sensual pursuits; briefly described, are followed by all the phrensy of disappointed and unsubdued passions.—As soon as there is neither comfort in the past, nor happiness in prospect, suicide is fled to, as a resource from immediate pain and trouble.—General causes of “immediate” suicide must exist either in bodily or mental sufferings, or in a combination of both.—Mere bodily pain, where the mind is unconscious of guilt or uneasiness, seldom produces suicide in the present times, though it often did among the ancients: reason of this difference.—Mental pain of two sorts; either that unavoidably suffered through the conduct of others, or brought on ourselves through our own misbehaviour: the former sometimes leads to a disgust of the world and to suicide, where the mind is not fortified by the strength of religious principles: such suicide has not to answer for the “producing cause” of it, (which was wholly external and unavoidable) but only for the effect the sufferer permitted it to have on himself.—Mental perturbations from conscious guilt, pride, &c. when it urges to immediate suicide (as it often does) has to answer both for “cause and effect;” and is therefore justly liable to our utmost abhorrence.—Despair its immediate harbinger.—Meanness and danger of this principle influencing human actions.

IN the last chapter the distant preparations of the mind for the accomplishment of self-murder in due time were traced; and it was found to be generally preceded by a life of dissipated luxury, and by a total want of all religious principle. But though it may be safely affirmed, that such a debauched and sceptical state of mind is the most frequent forerunner of the irrevocable blow, yet it would be the height of injustice to affirm, that it was always so: since there may be other causes tending to suicide, totally unconnected with vice or scepticism. A melancholic and desponding state of mind may be the parent of a thousand imaginary distresses, harder to be cured than real evils. These will insufferably torment and distract the human frame; so that reason shall be impaired and judgment weakened; the value of our existence be lessened in our own estimation; and a weariness of life succeed, with a fixed determination to

get rid of it. It was not, however, necessary in the last chapter to trace out these preparatory causes of suicide, since the design was chiefly to point out the stock from which it sprang, when surrounded with its most blackening and guilty horrors: which idea shall be principally, though not entirely, followed also in this chapter, wherein the incitements to "immediate" suicide are to be disclosed.

But is there no satiety in a life of gaiety and pleasure, or is he in a surer road even to the undisturbed enjoyment of worldly happiness, and consequently to a desire of life's continuance, who has stifled his reason, and quieted the sollicitations of his inward monitor? His dissolute manners, his gratifications of sense, his boundless ambition, his views of avarice, may, indeed, be pursued for a while with more confidence and success, but many circumstances will quickly conspire to give a check to the career and tyranny of his passions. His enfeebled appetites will at length become his tormentors; his body will be full of disease and pain and torture, and his fellow-creatures will, in many instances, be ready to censure that conduct, and to inflict that punishment on him here, from which he has in a manner persuaded himself he shall be free hereafter. Such will be the commencement of his difficulties and troubles, which will be marked in their progress by all the phrensy of unbridled passions; such as envy, rage, jealousy, disappointed lust, and mortified ambition. The fear of contempt and shame also, when unlawful and wicked practices are on the eve of discovery, will work more powerfully on the human breast than ever the sense of guilt did, and will raise a greater perturbation and torment in the mind than the fear of death itself. Such a wretched being, finding at length neither comfort in the past nor happiness in prospect, flies to suicide in relief of present misery; and there are not many commissions of self-murder, which may not be traced to the recesses of pride, impatience, shame, disappointment, and despair, as the immediate and effective sources from whence they flow.

But to come closer to the point. The general causes (insanity excepted) which lead immediately to "suicide's foul [s] birth," take their rise either from acute sufferings of body or mind, or from a mixture and combination of both. Instances of its commission from acute pain of body alone, where the mind is undisturbed by remorse and the conscience clear, are neither numerous nor

[s] Young.

important

important enough in these days to merit much attention. Examples [T], indeed, are not wanting in ancient history of those, who terminated a life of acute pain and bodily disorder by the stroke of suicide, and who possessed at the same time amiable and innocent manners, with minds pure from all stain of evil. But then it must be remembered, that these did but follow such opinions and sentiments of the times, as led them to deem suicide, on certain occasions, both innocent and laudable, as well as perfectly consistent with "their" notions of futurity. No wonder, then, that with such ideas about them, they saw little reason to bear excruciating and irremediable pain of body without delivering themselves from it; and (as it will appear hereafter) they were chiefly innocent characters, who did apply to this remedy from bodily pain. But the man of principle and character in modern times, thinking more justly of the matter from his better information, calls in the aid of religion to support him under the most excruciating tortures of body. Indeed, where the body has been emaciated by long pain and suffering, there is seldom vigour enough left in the mind even to summon up that sort of resolution, which is requisite to strike the deadly blow; and if that mind besides is at ease with respect to all conscious feelings, the desire and hopes of life, even to the last, are oftentimes strong; or if otherwise, the natural approaches of death are welcomed with a composure and resignation that bespeaks a far more rational and laudable and lasting fortitude than theirs can be deemed, who merely possess the momentary courage of plunging a dagger into their own breasts.

But immediate suicide is much oftener the resource of mental inquietude and distraction than of mere bodily pain. Now the troubles of the mind are evidently of two sorts; either such as are unavoidably endured through the behaviour of others, or such as men bring on themselves by their own misconduct. With regard to the former;—sharp is the pain and piercing the sorrow, which the pride, envy, treachery, cruelty, neglect or wickedness of others may have the power of inflicting on the most innocent and virtuous character. How often are the exertions of benevolence abused by crafty objects, and made subservient to vile and wicked purposes! The frank and open temper becomes a prey to the dissimulations of knavery, and many an innocent victim is led to the altar of poverty and ruin by the insinuations of pretended friendship, by an ingenuous,

*Why not also by
Lof of Character & the unavoidable
Fortune*

[T] See in particular the instance of Corellius Rufus, Part IV. chap. iv.

but fatal, reliance on the honesty of others. The plain and upright dealer seeks to improve his fortune in the strait paths of industry and moral integrity; but injustice, chicanery and fraud, travelling through secret and crooked ways, arrive at the goal of riches and advancement before him. The retired and virtuous character seeks to merit the jewel of domestic happiness by every exertion of conjugal and parental affection, by an intercourse of attentive and watchful love;—but the child of his hopes becomes a libertine and spendthrift, and the wife of his bosom rends his heart in twain. Sharp is the edge of such sorrow, and bitter this potion of grief to those, who are compelled to swallow it; since there is no disappointment or vexation in life equal to that which is felt by a mind fraught with keen perceptions, and refined sensibility, when all its kind and meritorious conduct towards others meets with nothing but slight, contempt, and perfidy. These are afflictions grievous to be borne; they undermine the health, strength, and spirits; they are arduous trials even to the most patient temper; they create suspicions of all mankind, cause the sufferer to be out of humour with the world and all its concerns, to be weary of himself and of life, and (unless he be supported by a strong sense of religion) often throw him into the arms of despondency and suicide. But conscious innocence, when fortified by religious trust, will carry one through arduous and astonishing trials. The good man must be ever exposed to injury and injustice from the wicked; but he will not thence conclude, that this world is only a prison and a place of torment, from which he may release himself at pleasure. He will rather consider it as a place of trial, wherein he is to approve his own integrity and uprightness, his patience and perseverance in well-doing, amid the folly and wickedness of those around him; and that the reward of all his sufferings awaits him hereafter. However, where such a divine trust and confidence is wanting, where such awful impressions of futurity, as would check all voluntary hastening into it, have not been cultivated, and where suicide, in consequence, has been embraced, as a refuge from unmerited sufferings, there it cannot be blameable as to its “producing cause,” (viz. the base conduct of others) since that was external and unavoidable by himself. Yet such trouble befalls not a man to good purpose, when he suffers himself to be thus overcome by it, when it drags him to such a dreadful conclusion of his worldly sorrows.

But

But there is an agitation and disquietude of mind full fraught with the terrors of conscious guilt. This is not only productive of frequent suicide, but also of its worst sort; since it has to answer for "cause" as well as "effect," and consequently must excite all our abhorrence. As long as a man can indulge his inordinate appetites of any kind to the full, there is little fear of his committing violence on himself; but when once from any concurrence of circumstances he begins, first to doubt, and then to experience, the little probability of their future gratification, his soul becomes a prey to the tyranny of corroding passions. Unsatisfied lust gnaws at his heart, or he is checked in the career of ambitious and golden prospects, or deprived of lawless power. His rapine and cruelty are on the eve of discovery; his extortion, violence, and fraud, are on the point of consigning him to infamy and ruin. The losses of the gaming-table annihilate his property, whilst enjoyment and peace are strangers to his breast. When his pride is thus chagrined and mortified, and the dread of disgrace, poverty and punishment besets him around, what can follow but shame, vexation and disgust? Friends forsake, disappointment goads, remorse embitters, rage renders frantic, hope, the last refuge of the wretched, fails, despair succeeds, and life becomes a burden. The tumultuous conflict is now near upon closing:—"Why should I live to be miserable, when the remedy "is in my own power?"—

"Eternity ne'er steals one thought between,

"And suicide completes the fatal scene [u].

[u] Gamblers, a Poem.—ANON.

— "There took her gloomy flight

"On wing impetuous a black fullen soul

"Blasted from hell with horrid lust of death."—YOUNG, Night V.

The

The following personification of suicide in Savage's *Wanderer* (Canto 2), is poetical and just.

"Here the lone hour a blank of life displays,

"Till now bad thoughts a fiend more active raise;

"A fiend in evil moments ever nigh,

"Death in her hand and phrensy in her eye.

"Her eye all red and sunk:—a robe she wore

"With life's calamities embroider'd o'er.

"A mirror in one hand collective shows

"Varied and multiplied that group of woes:—

The distant preparations of the mind for this dreadful catastrophe have their foundation in want of principle; the operating motive is always interested and selfish, and generally wicked, as being preceded by a life of sensuality and corrupt practices; whilst its immediate harbinger "Despair," is of all the incentives of human action the most mean [x] and despicable. Despair can never be pro-

ductive

" This endless foe to generous toil and pain

" Lolls on a couch for ease, but lolls in vain.

" She mufes o'er her woe-embroider'd vent;

" And self-abhorrence heightens in her breast.

" To shun her care the force of sleep she tries,

" Still wakes her mind, though slumbers doze her eyes.

" She dreams, starts, rises, stalks from place to place,

" With restless, thoughtful, interrupted pace :

" Now eyes the sun and curses every ray ;

" Now the green ground, where colour fades away.

" Dim spectres dance ; again her eye she rears,

" Then from the blood-shot ball wipes purpled tears.

" Then presses hard her brow with mischief fraught,

" Her brow half bursts with agony of thought :—

" From me (she cries) pale wretch ! thy comfort claim,

" Born of Despair and Suicide my name."

[x] Despair is pourtrayed in the following lines from Spenser's *Fairy Queen*.

" Ere long they come, where that same wicked wight *

" His dwelling has low in an hollow cave,

" Far underneath a craggy clift ypight,

" Dark, doleful, dreary, like a greedy grave

" That still for carrion carcases doth crave :

" On top whereof ay dwelt the ghastly owl,

" Shrieking his baleful note, which ever drave

" Far from that haunt all other cheerful fowl ;

" And all about it wandering ghosts did wail and howl.

" And all about old stocks and stubs of trees,

" Whereon nor fruit nor leaf was ever seen,

" Did hang upon the ragged rocky knees ;

" On which had many wretches hanged been,

" Whose carcases were scattered on the green,

" And thrown about the clifts. Arrived there

" That bare-head knight, for dread and doleful teen,

" Would fain have fled, ne durst approachen near,

" But the other forced him stay and comforted in fear.

* Despair.

" The

ductive of good, but abounds with evil. Cowardly in its principle, it flies from exertion; pitiful in its end, it regards self alone. The desperate man is ripe for any outrage or violence on himself or others; he cares neither what he does nor what becomes of him: on which account every wise government endeavours to discourage despair, as much as possible [r], in its system of policy; every prudent father does the same in the management of his children; every man of common sense in his own personal conduct. "While there is life there is hope," is a common saying: but the desponding man is ever ready to extinguish hope itself by self-assassination. The application of such a desperate remedy is so frequent and truly deplorable, that it is a great happiness for any one not to be able to appeal to his own domestic or friendly feelings on the subject: in his more general and social regards he is sure to suffer. Whereas vigour and exertion might have performed wonders; and many an one by a proper application of these harmless remedies, rather than of the sword or pistol,

"The darksome cave they enter; when they find
 "That cursed man low sitting on the ground,
 "Musing full sadly in his fullen mind;
 "His greasy locks, long growing and unbound,
 "Disorder'd hung about his shoulders round,
 "And hid his face; through which his hollow eyne
 "Look'd deadly dull, and stared as afoound;
 "His raw-bone cheeks through penury and pine
 "Were shrunk into his jaws, as he did never dine.
 "His garment, nought but many ragged clouts,
 "With thorns together pinn'd and patched was,
 "The which his naked sides he wrapt abouts;
 "And him beside there lay upon the grafs
 "A dreary corse, whose life away did pass
 "All-wallowed in his own yet lukewarm blood,
 "That from his wound yet welted fresh, alas!
 "In which a rusty knife fast fixed stood,
 "And made an open passage for the gushing blood."

[r] "Nil desperandum," is a most instructive lesson; and never was it more wisely applied on a public occasion than by the Roman senate after the battle of Cannæ; when, stifling every vindictive feeling, they met their imprudent consul Varro with thanks, "that he had not despaired of the republic." The effect was answerable; dependency vanished, and the Roman arms were ultimately triumphant. Private instances also are innumerable, wherein the exertion of this useful maxim has produced the most wonderful and advantageous consequences.

might not only have prevented the tears of friendly sorrow from being shed over his untimely grave, but have restored himself to peace and happiness by the conquest of his troubles, disappointments, and vices.

C H A P. IV.

A vicious and desperate action should at least be voluntary, and have some prospect of advantage or pleasure.—The suicide has not always this apology: led to it against his own inclinations to life by principles of modern honour.—Principles of honour (when it differs from conscience and virtue) founded on opinions and customs of men, and thought more binding by many than any moral or religious obligation.—Honour leads to suicide against a desire of life, in countenancing the duel.—The murder committed indeed by the hands of another, but made our own deed by giving or accepting the challenge.—Laws of modern honour affix a necessity of the payment of gambling debts; hence most frequent suicide; not through weariness of life, but want of means to gamble on.—If suicide be a crime when voluntary, how much greater when committed even in despite, as it were, of our own inclinations.—Duelling and gaming to be treated at large hereafter.—Courage the mean between fear and rashness.—Suicide a compound of these two, and therefore has no connexion with courage, which depends on their separation.—Courage must be accompanied by particular circumstances to render it laudable: these enumerated, and found not consistent with suicide.—Not meant to maintain, that cowards alone commit suicide, but only that the act in itself implies no true courage.—No judgment to be formed of a man's courage from the mode of his death; his behaviour at that time depending so much on circumstances.—The objection, "that to overcome the natural horrors of death by suicide must imply "courage," answered.—The question, "is it not more courageous to die by one's own hand than to live under ignominy?" answered (as far as it is necessary in this place).—The idea of plucking up courage to fly from pain and misery noticed: more true courage manifested in enduring than in flying from trouble.—The resolution exhibited in suicide, arising from a mixture of fear and rashness, deserves

no better a name than presumption and daringness: it therefore adds to the "general guilt" of suicide.—Suicide, with respect to its general guilt, the foul offspring of vile progenitors.

WHEN an action is highly vicious and desperate in its commission, the least that can be looked for is, that it should be voluntarily undertaken on the expectation of some advantage or pleasure to arise from its execution. But it unfortunately happens for the self-murderer, that even this poor apology is not always within his reach; since there are situations, which drive him to stain his hands with his own blood, even against all his interests, his inclinations and strong desires of life. What these situations or principles are shall now be considered. The word "Honour," whenever it has a meaning distinct from conscience and virtue, must have for its basis certain opinions and customs of men; and principles formed according to such opinions are apt to have a greater influence over many in the regulation of their conduct, than all other rules of moral or religious obligation. However, is it not a matter of serious grief to think, that the words Honour and Virtue, which must so truly import the same thing in their genuine signification, should be so widely separated in their present use, as not only in many instances to imply a difference, but even a contradiction? The point of examination then is, whether, when the ideas of virtue and religion are discarded, or at least considered only in a secondary light, the principles of modern honour will be a safeguard against the commission of suicide; or whether they will not in many instances lead directly to its perpetration, and that even contrary to a man's strongest desires of life's continuance?—To pass by many a fashionable vice, which implies no fashionable dishonour, there is one most prevailing, but unchristian practice, to which the laws of honour point, which must be deemed a direct species of self-murder; and that is, "the Duel." The mischief, indeed, is done by the hand of another; but when that hand is challenged to hazard the effect, wherein lies the difference with respect to the criminal part of the action? In ancient times the man of consequence often put himself to death by the hand of another, by his slave, his armour-bearer; in modern days he calls out one of his own rank to the chance of doing the same office for him. But as the nature of honour is very susceptible of affront, the hazard of life is proportionably great, and equal to the irritability of a man's disposition. The principle of duelling then is a most dangerous

dangerous one for the encouragement of suicide, because it frequently urges a man, contrary to his feelings, his interests, and his warmest wishes, to accelerate his own murder, at a time, perhaps, when he is entirely convinced of the great guilt of suicide. But it may be said—"I am not the challenger; I am called out, I must obey; I neither seek my opponent's life, nor would voluntarily put my own in his power. Let what will happen then, can I be deemed guilty either of his murder or my own?" The fullest answer to this objection must be looked for in a discussion of the words, "I must obey;" but to engage here in an inquiry of that nature would be deviating too far from the present point in view. Suffice it to observe, that accepting as well as giving a challenge, equally hazards one's own life; and whoever does that voluntarily, without benefit to others, is liable to have his death imputed to himself, which falls not short of actual suicide. The principles of modern honour, then, (which was all that was here meant to be proved) by leading to the duel, highly encourage one species of suicide, and that, perhaps, at a time when a man's natural desires and strongest propensities lead him anxiously to covet life's continuance.

But the same principles are enemies also in another instance, which contributes most frequently to an horrid species of self-murder, viz. by the stamp of necessity they affix to the immediate discharge of those debts which they are pleased especially to term honourable—the debts of the "Gaming-Table." Let a man of modern honour be involved in legal debts to his tradesmen, it seldom gives him much concern, and seldomer prompts him to quit life on a sudden, unless he feels himself in danger of suffering some great personal indignity. But let him have thrown away his patrimony in gambling, and have contracted such debts by unlucky throws of the dice as he has no hopes of discharging, rage at his ill success, disappointment and vexation at his losses, despair of the practicability of immediate and honourable payment, together with the known impossibility without such payment of appearing again in the regions of gambling, all these circumstances combined lead him to a desperate species of self-murder, and are, perhaps, one of its most frequent causes. Besides, as it is generally committed in a sudden paroxysm of distraction and fury, occasioned by a luckless throw, it stifles every attention that a man might be induced to pay in a cooler hour to the distresses of others, to the suggestions of his own humaner feelings,

as

as well as to the claims of self-interest and self-preservation. It is no weariness of life, no remorse of conscience, no disappointment of sensual gratifications, of ambition, of fame, which leads the gamester on to suicide; but merely the pressure of his debts of honour—the want of means to pursue [z] his favourite calling. Restore him these abilities, and he lives to every satisfaction of life he ever enjoyed—the rattling of the dice; and is in no danger from his own sword or pistol. In these instances, then, does modern honour impel to suicide even against all desires of life. But if suicide be a crime even when a man's own inclinations powerfully urge its commission, how much greater and more unnatural must its guilt needs appear, when perpetrated, as it were, in despite of all his own feelings! As the subjects of “Duelling and Gaming” are nearly connected with Suicide, and form, as it were, a triple-headed Cerberus of tremendous visage, some larger strictures will be made on these two destructive and unchristian practices in a subsequent part of this work.

But as the principles of modern honour are conceived to be closely connected with “Courage,” it will not be improper to subjoin in this place a few observations on that courage, which is supposed by many to be exhibited in the act of suicide, but which after it has been proved to be rather the result of temerity and a certain daringness of spirit, will tend to increase the weight of its “general guilt.”

Though the definitions of Courage are numerous, yet there is not, perhaps, a more compendious and just one than Aristotle's [A], who calls it “the mean between fear and rashness.” Let us see how far the act of suicide is to be found in this mean, and in consequence how far it can be said to be connected with courage. It is clear that the generality of suicide proceeds either from a timidity of disposition, not capable of bearing up against impending troubles, or from a sudden gust and violence of passion, which no one will scruple to stile impetuous and rash, or (as is often the case) from a mixture of both. Now this being granted, there seems to be no connexion whatever between suicide

[z] Such an one may truly exclaim,

“Vixi, & quem dederat cursum Fortuna, peregi.”—VIRG.

[A] ἡ ἀνδρεία μέσση ἐστὶ φόβου καὶ θάρρους.—Ethics, Lib. III. c. ix.

and courage, but rather the widest separation; since courage is equally distant from that fear or that rashness, which both separately and connectively form the basis of suicide. This might serve as a compendious answer to such as deem suicide an act of courage; but lest they should think it too concise, a further explanation shall be given of the matter.

Aristotle's definition above is of courage in the abstract, as a quality or disposition of the mind. But when this comes to be applied to particular instances, it must also be accompanied with particular circumstances in its exertion, in order to render it praise-worthy. True courage [B] must have a noble and virtuous basis for its exertion: it must face some danger, or it can merit no applause. But if the danger incurred tends to effect no good purpose, as it retires from one extreme, that of fear, so it encroaches on the other, that of rashness. Courage, likewise, to render it worthy of commendation, must show itself in the defence of others; for if employed wholly on self and self-concerns, it may be apt to take a different name, and to be absorbed in that term of despicable application—Selfishness. A man attacked by an highwayman may, indeed, acquire some reputation of courage by resisting at the hazard of his life, even though self-interest (as to defending his property) seems principally concerned. This happens, both because he might have quietly submitted to the loss of a trifling property without any risk of murderous consequences, and because he is actually at the same time doing much service to the community by striving to oppose its lawless members. But if that public robber fight ever so stoutly in return, he acquires not the praise due to courage, and that for very

[B] Sed ea animi elatio, quæ cernitur in periculis & laboribus, si justitiâ vacat pugnatque non pro salute communi, sed pro suis commodis, in vitio est; non enim modo id virtutis non est, sed potius immanitatis, omnem humanitatem repellentis. Itaque probè definitur a Stoicis fortitudo, cum eam virtutem esse dicunt propugnantem pro æquitate.—Omnino fortis animus & magnus duabus rebus maximè cernitur, quarum una in rerum externarum desipientiâ ponitur, cum persuasum sit, nihil hominem, nisi quod honestum decorumque sit, aut admirari, aut optare, aut expetere oportere; nullique neque homini neque perturbationi animi, nec fortunæ succumbere. Altera est res, ut, cum ita sis affectus animo ut supra dixi, res geras, magnas illas quidem & maximè utiles, sed & vehementer arduas plenæque laborum & periculorum, cum vitæ tum multarum aliarum rerum, quæ ad vitam pertinent.—Fortis verò & constantis est non perturbari in rebus asperis, nec tumultuantem de gradu deijci, ut dicitur, sed præsentī animo uti & consilio nec a ratione discedere.—Cic. de Officiis, Lib. I.

obvious

obvious reasons;—he is bold in a bad, self-interested cause, and is only to be deemed a very daring and desperate fellow.

Let us examine the courageous spirit of suicide by these rules. Is its cause or basis disinterested, generous, virtuous? No: it is at best but the refuge of private misery, much oftener of vice, infamy and deserved punishment. Does it face much danger? Yes: for it not merely hazards, but certainly extinguishes the life of its undertaker. But to what good end or purpose does it face this certain destruction? It is hard to say: since it will be found in the following chapters, how little good ensues from suicide either to a man's own or his neighbour's interests. But were others concerned in this boasted exertion, or had their benefit any share in its completion? None at all: it began in self, centered in self, and ended in self; and the best concern, perhaps, that others shared in it, was that of least account with the murderer himself, viz. the ridding society of an useless and pernicious member. The highwayman and the person attacked seem united in the suicide; he makes a desperate plunge on himself, he succeeds and falls a prey to his own victory. The self-murderer also frequently imitates the spirit of the highwayman in shooting himself through the head, when he finds no other possible way of escaping from infamy and punishment: but where are any principles of true courage to be found in all this behaviour?

But the maintainer of courage in suicide has his defence to make; let us hear it. “What, then, (says he) would you affirm, that all men have been cowards, “who have committed suicide? What will you say of Cato, Brutus, &c.” It is wished to affirm no such thing. These illustrious Romans, as well as many other suicides both ancient and modern, were men of undoubted valour and courage in the whole tenour of their lives; but not the more so for their self-destruction. Experience certainly confirms the fact, that men of courage, as well as cowards, have destroyed themselves; and it is only meant to assert, that the act of suicide itself implies no exertion of true courage. Courageous men have been impatient and fearful under the terrors of death in the shape of illness and distempers, who have braved all its horrors with composure in the field of battle; while cowards, who have run away from the latter, have been remarkably resigned and patient under the dangers of the former. The certainty of

immediate death oftentimes gives a fillip to the spirit and resolution, and thereby enables the coward to brave it at the moment [c] with as much apparent fortitude, as the man of uniform and steady resolution. The attendant circumstances also of a man's death often contribute their share in supporting the adventitious appearance of spirit under its stroke. It has been observed, for instance, that a man's courage in meeting death often increases in proportion to the number of spectators. This is verified in the field of battle, where the soldiery are inspirited by the presence of each other to face death with intrepidity: and (if it may be permitted without offence to subjoin after mention of the other) it is also visible at the execution of malefactors, among whom a croud of spectators influences many an one to embrace the resolution of "dying hard," (as it is called) that is, without flinching, whose hardness would have failed him, had he suffered in the privacy of his own cell. As then there is no sure sign of the previous character of the man, as to his cowardice or courage, from his behaviour in the very point of death, so neither is there any conclusion of that kind to be drawn from the mere mode of that death; and it would be a cruel stroke of injustice, upon the man of an even, uniform and consistent share of courage, if a scoundrel in every shape were to be deemed courageous, merely because he could summon up the momentary resolution (never existing in him before, nor certainly to be repeated) of firing a pistol through his own head.

But objectors say further, "Is there then no extraordinary exertion of courage in overcoming the natural horrors of death, which are so forcibly implanted in every one?" This is no more than that sort of rashness or daringness, which every one exerts in a greater or less degree, who is guilty of enormous crimes, which have obliged him first to stifle or overcome all sense of duty and all feelings of conscience. There may be daring villains and desperate bravadoes; and if the suicide deserve not the former censure from his previous life, he will, however, find it difficult to avoid the imputation of the latter by the mode of

[c] Dicam quod sentiam; fortiorem eum esse, qui in ipsa morte est quam qui circa mortem est. Mors enim admota etiam imperitis animum dedit non vitandi inevitabilia. At illa, quæ in propinquo tantum est utique ventura, desiderat lentam animi firmitatem, quæ est rarior, nec potest nisi a sapiente præstari.—SENECA, Ep. xxx.

his death : but a bravado deserves not the honourable appellation of a man of true courage.

“ But suppose a man, who has hitherto supported a good reputation in the world, to be drawn in to commit some base and dishonourable action : he becomes indignant of life under a load of infamy and reproach, and puts a period to it with his own hands. Does not such an one show more spirit, resolution and courage in his self-*assassination* than another, whose dastardly soul leads him to be content to breathe under his indignity and shame, or even to suffer its inglorious punishment ?” We are no further obliged to answer this question here than by saying, that each person in this case follows the bent of his own natural temper ; the one by dying, to get rid of his own troublesome feelings ; the other by living, possibly with the hopes of making some reparation for his fault. The latter lives, perhaps, through “ fear” of dying, and the former dies through the “ rashness” of despair ; while true courage, which is equally exempt from fear or rashness, and whose effects are only exalted by their leading causes, seems to have little or nothing to do in the business ;—except that the man, who lives on in despite of ignominy, and does it on proper motives, must be deemed the most resolute and courageous of the two.

Again ; “ Is there not more spirit and courage in breaking at once through unavoidable evils by the stroke of suicide, than [D] in pitifully enduring a
“ life.

[D] Of this opinion seemed a young lady, who left the following lines in her window on the morning of her self-murder.

“ O Death, thou pleasing end of human woe !
“ Thou cure for life ! thou greatest good below !
“ Still mayest thou fly the coward and the slave,
“ And thy soft slumbers only bless the brave.”

On reading which a gentleman wrote thus :

“ O Dice, ye vain diverters of our woe,
“ Ye waste of life, ye greatest curse below !
“ May ne'er good sense again become your slave,
“ Nor your false charms allure and cheat the brave.”

This young lady at the age of nineteen was in possession of a large fortune. She was extremely beautiful, and by no means deficient in understanding or wit ; but was immoderately fond of play.
She.

"life of continual misery?" But if it implies courage of any sort to strike the stroke, does it not at the same time imply timidity in flying from the evil instead of intrepidity in resisting [E] it? Is it not somewhat similar to flying from the field of battle, instead of fighting bravely and awaiting the issue? To bear misery with equanimity and patience seems the truer and more substantial proof of courage [F]. For has the suicide courage to strive against pain, or to overcome trouble? No; he sinks under it, he flies before it. But his spirit is of another sort. He has boldness to encounter annihilation or futurity, or rather to allay the misery of the moment without thinking of consequences.

She soon gambled away her whole fortune. Reflections on the past became bitter; anticipation of the future alarming; melancholy increased and weariness of life succeeded. Being at Bath in the year 1731, she was seen to retire to her chamber with her usual composure, and was found in the morning hanging by a gold and silver girdle to a closet-door. Her youth, beauty, and distress, rendered her an object of pity to every one—but a near relation, who, on hearing of her death, was inhuman enough to exclaim in a punning style, "Then she has tied herself up from play."—See *Gent. Mag.* vol. i. and vol. xxxii.

[E] Hercules, (whom no one accuses of cowardice) when oppressed with misfortunes, is made to say, "That he will resolutely bear his misery, and not kill himself, for fear he should be deemed a coward; since he, who cannot bear the strokes of adversity, cannot be supposed able to face the darts of an enemy."—See Euripides, *Hercules furens*.

[F] *Rebus in adversis facile est contemnere mortem,*

Fortius ille facit, qui miser esse potest.—MARTIAL.

A few years ago an officer went into Hyde-park with an intention of shooting himself. He applied a pistol to his forehead; the priming flashed, but no discharge followed. A man of poor appearance, whom the officer had not observed, or perhaps thought worthy his notice, instantly ran up and wrested the pistol from his hands. The other drew his sword, and was about to stab his deliverer, who with much spirit replied, "Stab me, Sir, if you think proper; I fear death as little as you, but I have more courage. More than twenty years I have lived in affliction and penury; and I yet trust in God for comfort and support." The officer was struck (as well he might) with these spirited words, continued speechless and motionless for a short time, and then bursting into tears gave his purse to the honest man. He then inquired into his story, and became his private friend and benefactor; but he made the poor man swear, that he would never make inquiries concerning himself, or seem to know him, if chance should ever again bring them in sight of each other.

Did not this poor man of patience say with truth of himself, "I have more courage, Sir, than you?"

—"the brave, the gallant Altamont,

"So call'd, so thought—and then he fled the field."—YOUNG, *Night V.*

"Why had he thus false spirit to rebel,

"And why not fortitude to suffer well?"—SAVAGE'S *Wanderer*.

He

He has rashness to lift his arm and strike against every civil, social, domestic, and virtuous principle. He defies the most strong and natural impulse implanted in man for his own preservation. He dares to resist all the horrors of death, and to rush into the presence of God with the covering of his own blood. All this may be reputed courage by some, but what if others should rather deem it temerity, fool-hardiness and madness! Or if it must still be termed courage, how little is that species of bravery to be coveted, which only impels a man to his own destruction without benefit to others! Better is cowardice than such courage as this—"better the live dog (as says the proverb) than the dead lion."

Thus nothing desirable, nothing meritorious has been discovered in the rise, progress, and completion of self-murder. Its preparatory causes, such as excessive dissipation, scepticism, and infidelity, are little to be commended: its immediate incitements, the mazes and perplexities of vice, with their baneful effects on the mind, are full of horror, disgrace, and infamy; whilst its final instigator, despair, is the most mean, pitiful, and destructive of all principles of human action: neither does it gain any degree of credit on the score of honour or courage. So that altogether it may justly be pronounced of suicide on the head of its "general guilt,"—that it is the foul offspring of a most deformed and vicious race of progenitors.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

PART

P A R T II.

THE "SPECIAL GUILT" OF SUICIDE ILLUSTRATED.

C H A P. I.

Gradations in the shock of death; by suicide the most dreadful of all; in this case the death itself not so much dwelt on, as the mode of its accomplishment.—Suicide an object of just abhorrence, because contrary to the first principles implanted in man, those of self-preservation.—The natural horror of death a guard to life, which men might otherwise be induced to quit too easily.—Objection 1. concerning suicide not being always against the propensities of human nature, since death is often coveted rather than life, answered.—A weariness of life is never to be ascribed to the genuine feelings of nature, but to its corruptions from external circumstances.—Objection 2. concerning suicide being not always and necessarily an offence against the first law of our nature, self-preservation, because self-preservation is not of universal obligation, answered, by showing how far self-preservation is to be the guide of our actions, and when it is to yield to higher motives of conduct.—No apology can be drawn from hence for voluntary and selfish suicide.

“**S**PEAK no ill of the dead,” says the voice of humanity: yet the nature of the present subject calls for a suspension of this general compassion, till the lifeless body has been brought (as it was among the Egyptians of old) to a solemn trial. They scrutinized the whole conduct of the man; we sit in judgment on that last act of his life alone, by which he voluntarily deprived himself of his mortal existence, his previous conduct being of no further consequence, than as it served to aggravate or extenuate the guilt of his self-murder.

To view the powers of death over a fellow-creature is at all times an awful and solemn spectacle; but many circumstances [G] may conspire to augment the force of its impression. When death sinks an hoary head into the grave by a gradual decay, or when it terminates a long and painful illness, its terrors are much abated by the expectation that was formed of the impending stroke. When its attack is more sudden, and also levelled against the bloom of youth, yet even this premature intrusion is lamented with a share of composure and resignation; death being at all times a natural consequence of violent disease. But when the vital heat this moment glows in full strength and vigour, and the next is totally extinguished by some frightful accident, our feelings are more forcibly affected; surprize and consternation add new poignancy to sorrow, and we shudder at the sight of so sudden and important a change. Yet there is a deprivation of life more calamitous and dreadful than any of the former, because neither nature nor accident have any share in its completion; and that is, by murder. There is something so repugnant of all natural feelings, and so forcible, in the cry of human blood, that the laws of the land (and indeed those of most countries) not only require blood for blood, when one man slays another, but also a compensation or satisfaction, whenever man's blood is accidentally shed by an irrational animal, or even by an inanimate mass of matter; so that not only an horse which mortally strikes his keeper, but even a wheel or beam, which happens to crush a man to death, is forfeited under the name of Deodand [H], as an expiation for human blood.

The

[G] ————— "plurima mortis imago." ————— VIRG.

[H] Sir Edward Coke says, that the law of Deodands is founded upon Exodus xxi. 28. "Si bos cornu percusserit virum," &c. — Institutes of Laws of England, Part III. c. viii.

There is a death likewise "per infortunium," where no reasonable creature concurs to it, or a death, which is without the fault or procurement of another. This, as Bracton says, is not properly "Cædium hominis," or killing of man by man; nor is in truth a felony, or punishable as a crime; yet it is what the law takes notice of, and makes what occasioned the death to be forfeited; and this forfeiture is what the law calls a "Deodand." Res Deo datæ,—forfeited to the King, or Lord of the Liberty, and to be distributed "in pios usus" among the poor, for the appeasing of God's wrath, and as the best recompence for blood casually shed. The practice is founded in scripture;—"And surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man," (Gen. ix. 5.)—"If an ox gore a man or a woman that they die, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit," (Exod. xxi. 28.) It was formerly a given rule, that "Omne quod movet, cum eo quod occidit Deodandum est Regi;"

The idea of shedding man's blood then being so heinous in its very nature, the horrors of death become grievously multiplied at the sight of a mangled body, which has fallen a prey to the stabs of some merciless villain. But when we are moreover informed, who that cruel murderer was,—that those brains were voluntarily scattered by his own pistol, or that heart's blood was poured

or, according to the monkish verse, “*Omnia quæque movent ad mortem, sunt Deodanda.*” Yet the practice seems to be more moderate in our days; as it finds only that to be forfeited as Deodand, which immediately causes the death; as the wheel only, not the whole cart and horses. The law in favour of the Deodand is positive, though we cannot now fully account for its origin with us. And though “the Mirror” (c. 1, 13.) seems to father the first ordinance upon Glanville; yet the learned Fabian Philips, in his “*Legal Rights of the Courts of Judicature,*” has stripped me of all good opinion of that author. Fleta, indeed, gives us a “*provisum est, quod pro animabus antecessorum Regis, omniumque fidelium defunctorum tanquam precium sanguinis distribuatur, & ideo Deodanda vocantur.*”——UMFREVILLE'S *Lex Coronatoria*, vol. i. chap. Deod.

The passage referred to above in Fleta, (seu *Commentarius Juris Anglicani sic nuncupatus, sub Edwardo primo ab anonymo conscriptus*) Lib. I. c. xxv. de *Officio Coronatoris*, is as follows: “*Hujusmodi autem, quæ pro mortis causâ reputantur, ut batellus cum onere & omni attillamento, carecta cum onere & equis, & quicquid mobile sit in molendino, & hujusmodi, appreciari debent; & secundum pretium villatæ liberari. Ex his autem provisum est,*” &c. as above.

The ancients also had laws of the same nature with the modern forfeitures of Deodands, to show their horror of shedding man's blood. “*Inanimate things (said the laws of Athens) which have been instrumental in effecting any man's death, shall be cast out of the territories.*”——PETITI *Leges Atticæ*.

A beautiful statue, having by its fall from its pedestal crushed a man to death, was solemnly adjudged by a sentence given in the Prytaneum (where these matters were to be determined according to a law of Draco) to be cast out of Attica, and thrown into the sea.—See PETITI *Leges Atticæ*, and the writers he quotes.

The following passage in *Æschines's* Oration against Ctesiphon confirms the usage of such a law as the above. “*It would be a grievous thing in you, O Athenians, who are used to exterminate from your territories such pieces of wood, of stone or iron, things inanimate and senseless, as have been the accidental cause of a man's death, by falling on him; for you, who cut off and bury that hand separate from the rest of the body, which hath committed self-murder; for you to reward the undeserving,*” &c.

Plato likewise, in his treatise “*De Legibus,*” Lib. IX. appoints as follows. “*If a beast of burden, or other animal, kill a man, (except in public shows) let the relations of the deceased bring the matter before the judges; and let the beast, being condemned, be slain without the borders of the territory. If any thing inanimate (lightning or other weapon sent from heaven excepted) shall either by its own fall, or by a man's falling upon it, deprive him of life, let application be made to the judge, and let the inanimate thing be exterminated, as in the case of animals.*”

out by the point of his own sword, the bosom heaves with a complication of jarring passions. Pity and detestation, grief and abhorrence, alternately swell the heart, when the commission of so desperate and unnatural a crime is announced. An equal mixture of sorrow and indignation possesses the soul, on the reflection, that a rational being should so far forget every domestic and social duty, as suddenly to involve his dearest connexions in misery and distraction; should so far transgress that law of self-preservation, which actuates the lowest animal, as willingly to plunge himself into disgrace, infamy, and death!

The communication of death at all, of sudden death in particular, to the family of the deceased, is ever an unwelcome and painful task. However, the dread of making the discovery is abundantly heightened, when the fatal event was occasioned by some frightful accident, still more when by murder. But if the eyes of our departed friend were closed in perpetual darkness by the stroke of "self"-murder, the scene is instantly changed; the death itself is no longer dwelt on, but only the "mode" of its accomplishment. "Had it happened" (we are ready to say) in the course of nature, or even by the hands of "another, the sources of consolation might have been many, and we had been content: but now all our difficulty consists in keeping "the manner" of the death a secret from the widowed wife (widowed by such unnatural means) "and fatherless children." But why a secret? Because the first feelings of human nature rise so powerfully against it, that we would fain save the afflicted family the additional horror of the bloody-minded scene. It is certain that death puts on its foulest visage in the form of suicide; nay, so horrid and unnatural does the very act itself appear, that it is scarce believed to have been committed by a man in his senses. In pity, therefore, to himself, all pains are taken to denominate it an act of phrensy; in compassion to his suffering family, the miserable consolation is usually afforded them, that he was insane and a madman. Vain, therefore, is the opinion of those who maintain, that there is no law of nature against the commission of suicide; since it is plain, that the first impulses of human feelings clearly point out, that there is something materially wrong and strangely unnatural in its perpetration: but these first impressions are neither to be overlooked nor neglected, being forcible and convincing arguments of its special and enormous guilt. For to what purpose are these shocks at a violent death

death so strongly implanted in the human breast, but to make men careful of that life, which otherwise they might often not think worth preserving? A small share of bodily pain or mental inquietude might lead to a resolution of getting rid of life, were it not for the natural horror that is entertained of dying; which horror is like "the flaming sword, appointed to guard the tree of life."

But it is objected, "What if I should so far have overcome my natural horrors of death, as to have less apprehensions from them than from a dread of living; to which propensity of my nature am I to submit? The propensity towards self-destruction in this case being supposed to outweigh that towards self-preservation, must I not be said to follow my natural feelings more directly and effectually by compassing that self-destruction, to which they so powerfully draw me, than by attending to those calls of self-preservation, from which they actually dissuade me. It cannot, therefore, be asserted with truth, that self-preservation is, in all cases, a natural propensity, or that the feelings of nature must, at all times, be contradicted by the stroke of suicide." The fallacy of the argument seems to lie in this point; that it wants proof that any man (not disordered in his senses) ever was inclined to self-murder by the mere propensities of his nature, unbiassed by external circumstances. A weariness of life must proceed from a number of accidental causes, which in the progress of existence have arisen to disturb and warp the mind from the natural bent of its inclinations. The desire of self-destruction is, therefore, very improperly termed a "natural" feeling, acting in opposition to other natural feelings, viz. those of self-preservation. The real propensities of human nature are not changeable, much less contradictory; but opinions and habits of life, principles and practices may be superinduced on original feelings, which may tend to weaken, and at length to stifle, the pure and genuine impulses of nature. Though, therefore, a man should have so far overcome his natural horror of death, as to have superseded all wishes of self-preservation, and even to have coveted its contrary, self-destruction, yet it does not follow from thence, that he can be said to be actuated by two different and opposite principles of nature, of which he ought to yield to the strongest; but only that he has stifled his "real" natural propensity towards self-preservation, by a variety of circumstances tending to inspire him with a disgust of life. It

is possible also (and far from improbable) that, together with his natural feelings towards self-preservation, he may have stifled his virtuous propensities, his integrity and judgment, his principles of humanity, the exertion of his reason, the influence of his religion, and the suggestions of his conscience: which being the case, however he may be urged by his present feelings towards self-destruction, they will not be the genuine feelings of human nature, but the prejudices of folly, the propensities of vice, and the corruptions of a depraved and wicked imagination. A sin is no less a sin, because some are able to overcome all the obstacles that nature has placed in the way of its perpetration.

Another objection concerns the extent or universality of the obligation towards self-preservation, as a law of our nature. "If self-preservation be a natural duty, and not to be dispensed with, how shall we prevent men (say objectors) from being cowards, unjust or inhuman, to preserve their own lives; how shall we persuade them ever to sacrifice those lives for the good of their country, or to hazard them for the benefit of others, or even in defence of their own interest and property? There seems an end of every magnanimous and disinterested sentiment, if every idea is to center in that of self-preservation, as the first principle of human actions." That the idea of self-preservation is one of the first and strongest implanted in all animals cannot be denied; but it does not follow from thence, or is meant to be asserted, that it is therefore to be the whole and sole guide of human actions. Irrational animals are guided by instinct to preserve themselves, though even this instinct does not at all times operate without exception. The hazards they will undergo in defence of their young, the fierceness with which the most timid of quadrupeds or of the feathered race seems inspired, when their helpless offspring are in danger, plainly indicates, that something different from self-preservation is then stirring within them, which provokes a spirit of resistance and boldness, very dangerous to their own safety, and often destructive of their own lives. But if this be the case with the brute creation, man, who has so many superior principles and motives of action, is by the help of those to correct and regulate his natural propensities towards self-preservation. His ideas on this matter are to be guided by those principles of reason and religion, which are to be the sovereign directors of all his conduct. These will, in most instances,

instances, coincide and co-operate with his natural feelings and propensities towards life, but they will also in others lead him to the performance of duties and services that necessarily endanger his personal safety, and draw him into an hazard of losing life itself. The performance of the duties being his just point in view, and not to be neglected, he is not answerable for consequences which he cannot obviate, even though they should bring destruction and death upon himself. But in all such cases it is to be remembered, that death comes an uninvited guest, being an unwelcome, though necessary, attendant on some just or noble action; and that it comes also through the medium of external and unavoidable causes, and through the hands of others, not in consequence of a man's own inclinations or self-destroying purposes. The natural propensity towards self-preservation is not, therefore, hurt or destroyed by such a disinterested behaviour, but is only rendered subservient in some cases, and to a certain degree, (as it ought to be) to superior duties—to the laws of social union, of moral obligation and religious obedience [1].

C H A P. II.

The simplest deductions of reason lead to the belief of a Divine Being, the Creator and Preserver of the Universe, on whom all creatures are dependent.—Nothing in the material, vegetable or animal world created in vain, or exists now without its use.—Man, therefore, knows not the importance of his life, in the system of the universe, to society, to himself.—He is not acquainted with final effects.—The principle of life and death belongs not to him: he knows not why he was brought into life at such a particular period, or to perform such a particular part; but he evidently flies by suicide from the part assigned him by his natural Governor.—Moral imputation implies a state of probation, and consequently of submission; but this is overturned by the impatience of suicide.—It is offensive to our moral Governor in all its principles and motives by the defiance of his laws, by its

[1] See more of self-preservation, its extent and obligations, in Part VI. c. i. Examination of Donne.

injustice to society, and injury to ourselves.—Objection, “I did not consent to my own life, and therefore may quit it at pleasure.” This answered.—Objection, “God gave me life as a blessing; if it cease to be so, and prove a curse, I rely on his benevolence and forgiveness in my getting rid of it.” Answered.

IT being apparent, that nature has implanted amid the chief of human sensations an horror of death in general, of death by murder in particular, with a peculiar detestation and abhorrence of self-murder, the next subject of inquiry is, how far reason confirms and heightens this natural propensity towards self-preservation. Now without entering into any abstruse and metaphysical reasoning on the nature of man, it may be more satisfactory and useful to adopt an easy and popular mode of arguing, in which it will be sufficient to observe, that the first and simplest deductions of reason tend towards a belief of the existence of a Divine Being, who is the Creator and Preserver of the Universe, and on whom all sublunary creatures are in consequence dependent. The question then readily occurs, “Does self-murder coincide with the duty and obedience which is owing to this Supreme Being, or does it contradict and run counter to it?” Now as the most considerable defenders of suicide, on what they term natural and rational grounds, do either actually believe in (or affect so to do) the existence and providence of an all-wise and benevolent Being, it seems needless (especially as it would lead into so wide a field) to spend any time in proving these important points; from whence the natural and moral government of God, or, in other words, the submission and dependence of man, necessarily flow.

Limited as is the scale of human understanding, yet it is sufficiently enlarged to comprehend the most wonderful ideas of the power, wisdom and goodness of the great Creator and Governor of all things. From the admirable contrivance of what is already known, and is daily discovering, concerning the order, beauty and harmony of the system of the universe, there is no room to doubt, but that every the least particle of the material world had its certain and peculiar use in its original creation, which has been maintained through an infinitude of subsequent modifications; and this, because Almighty Wisdom could make nothing in vain. But whatever displays any superior beauty or excellence in its nature, furnishes at the same time an additional argument, that

such a production could never have been fruitless. No part then of the vegetable world can be supposed void of all use and service in the general system, not even the flower that seems

“ born to blush unseen,
“ And waste its fragrance on the desert air.”

If a rise be made through the gradations of nature to animal life, the argument also rises in due proportion; and it can still less be supposed that life, however confined in its powers, was bestowed without a purpose through the innumerable links in the chain of animated nature. If an advance be made still higher, even to rationality and the scale of man, it would be folly to imagine that his animation was not connected with a chain of intellectual existence. But if the species of mankind be necessary for that purpose, and that species be composed of individuals, which of those individuals can say with propriety, “ I am useless in my generation, and may quit my post at pleasure?” What right can one man claim of deserting his station in preference to another, and what would be the consequence of a general desertion? If a man think his single life useless in the universe, and that therefore it may be disposed of at his own pleasure, how can he have discovered this? How does he know, what may be the connexion of his own existence with a chain of being, of which he may form one link not wantonly [κ] to be broken? If he deem himself utterly unimportant to society, (though it is hard to find so truly solitary a being) yet how can he be completely satisfied, that his life certainly is and ever will so continue; or that he is not counteracting by his abrupt departure (as far as he is able) some design of Providence in placing him in this situation? If he plead self and his own wretchedness,—that a benevolent Deity can never wish any one to live in misery, how can he be certain, that his present forlorn and abject condition may not be changed through patience, industry, and exertion, into one of ease, satisfaction, and comfort? How can he be satisfied, that his sufferings in this life are not materially connected with his future happiness? How can he be convinced, that he is not for ever injuring his condition in a future state by thus anticipating its arrival?

[κ] “ All are but parts of one stupendous whole.”——POPE.

A gra-

A gracious Providence has been pleased to conceal from man the seasonable times of life [L] and death; and in proportion as his special kindness in thus keeping men in the dark must be acknowledged and adored, so it must be equally a transgression against the order of his dispensations, and the just rules of resignation and submission, to break with violence the thread of life. It is the "use" of life, not the "dominion" over it, or "sole property" in it, which God has bestowed on man. The principle of life and death does in no case belong to him; no one is concerned in giving life to himself, or can continue his mortal existence to what length he pleases: by what authority then does he assume [M] the liberty of its destruction? No one knows why he was brought into the world, to act his part on the stage of life, at such a particular time; as little does he know how long that part is to continue, or of what cast it will be, when acted through: but thus much he certainly knows, that he flies from and deserts his part, when he abruptly quits the stage of life in the midst of his performance. Does he not then attempt to alter (as far as in him lies) the designation of the great Distributor of parts below? Does he not return to Him with this language in his mouth; "I liked not the part assigned me; I was weary of it, and would have nothing more to do with it; and as I did not choose for myself, I would submit to no other appointment" [N]? These then

[L] "Prudens futuri temporis exitum

"Caliginosa nocte premit Deus."—HOR. Od. XXIX. Lib. iii.

"Safe in the hand of one dispensing power,

"Or in the natal or the mortal hour."—POPE.

[M] "Vain man! 'tis Heaven's prerogative

"To take, what first it deign'd to give,

"Thy tributary breath:

"In awful expectation plac'd

"Await thy doom, nor impious haste,

"To pluck from God's right hand his instruments of death."

WARTON'S Ode on Suicide.

"You were not produced when you pleased, but when the world had need of you. Hence a wife and good man, mindful who he is, and whence he came, and by whom he was produced, is attentive only, how he may fill his post regularly and dutifully to God."—EPICETUS'S Discourses, B. III. c. xxiv. sect. 5. (MRS. CARTER'S Translation.)

[N] "Remember, that you are an actor in a play, of whatever part the Master of the company pleases; if he assigns you a short one, of a short one; if a long one, of a long one; if he chooses

then are general principles of dissatisfaction and disobedience shown by the self-murderer to the allotments of Providence. He refuses submission to that natural authority which a Creator has over the mere creature of his will, to dispose of him at pleasure.

But this general disobedience is much heightened, when the Deity is considered in the light of a moral as well as natural governor. A state of moral imputation implies a state of probation; and that, a state of resignation and submission, every way inconsistent with the idea of quitting life at pleasure. A moral government (which implies a future day of account) requires an attention to certain rules and precepts, either naturally enjoined or preternaturally revealed. If then the supreme moral Governor has enjoined a resignation to our state, be it ever so grievous, and has annexed a proportionable degree of reward hereafter for innocent sufferings, all interest in the blessings of futurity must be hazarded by the impatience of suicide; so that not only an end is put to our lives here, but to our prospects of happiness hereafter. If the misery which impels to the thoughts of suicide were brought on by others, then the opportunity is great of exercising the virtues of resignation and fortitude; if by our own misconduct and vices, then will disobedience be heaped on disobedience, by rushing thus precipitately into the presence of an offended Deity. But if any notion of futurity, or any acknowledgment of an overruling Providence be scarce in all our thoughts, this is an accumulated load of guilt, and a perfect state of rebellion against the Author and Preserver of human life.

The benevolent Deity has bestowed a freedom of will on man, with which He bids him pursue his own happiness; but it is to be the happiness of his "whole" existence, future as well as present. He has given him "reason" to guide that free-will; and reason always leads to our preservation, not destruction. There is much offence then committed against the moral Governor of the Universe, when men refuse to follow that rule of conduct which He has prescribed them; for though He does not control, yet neither does He

"you should personate a poor man, or a lame man, or a magistrate, or a private person, see that you perform your character to the best of your power: since this is your business, to act well the character assigned you; but to choose it belongs to another."—EPICETUS's *Enchiridion*, chap. xxiii.

approve all human actions. If in particular the causes be examined which usually prompt to suicide, it can scarcely be imagined, that either its preparatory principles, or its influencing motives, or its immediate instigator, can merit the approbation of the Deity. An utter carelessness for the concerns of futurity, if not a downright infidelity, can scarce do it; nor are pride, lust, avarice, ambition, rage, chagrin, disappointment, and despair, very amiable qualities in His sight; consequently suicide, both in cause and effect, must needs be an heavy offence against the Providence and moral government of God. But the Deity is pleased also to declare Himself offended at the injuries and injustice we do to one another, and even to ourselves; nay, so great is his benevolence, that for the sake of promoting the peace and happiness of mankind, He considers and punishes such offences equally, and sometimes more than those committed immediately against Himself. A spirit of charity and kindness in our social concerns covers a multitude of other failings in the sight of God. All the guilt, therefore, that suicide implies against the good order and peace of society, and against a man's own interest and happiness, (and how great that guilt is will soon appear) is an aggravation of its offence against God. But if Providence permits not the fall of a "sparrow" without his notice, how much less the death of a "man" without inquiry? and as the cry of human blood is great, so it matters not by what man's hand the murder was committed; only that there is something peculiarly horrid and offensive in its being by his own.

But it is urged in justification of suicide; "As I came not into life by any consent of my own, I am at liberty to quit it at my own pleasure." It is true, that a man's own consent could have nothing to do with his first existence in the world, but yet he usually seems very well pleased, with and thankful for the [o] gift of life, till some mortified vanity or disappointed passion tends to

[o] ————— "Wilt thou enjoy the good,
 " Then cavil the conditions? and though God
 " Made thee without thy leave—what if the son
 " Prove disobedient, and reprov'd, retort,
 " Wherefore didst thou beget me? I fought it not?"
 " Wouldst thou admit for his contempt of thee
 " That proud excuse? yet him not thy election,
 " But natural necessity begot."——MILTON, *Par. Lost*, 10.

make him deem it a burden. There is naturally a great terror of death in the state of childhood; which proves that in that state there exists a fondness for life, and an unwillingness to be deprived of it. Its genuine pleasures are then tasted without alloy or mixture of vice. The first principles of instruction inculcate the idea of a superior Being, the Creator and Preserver of the world. As years increase, experience confirms this fundamental truth, of which new proofs exhibit themselves every day to an attentive and inquisitive mind. It is manifest also, that all the pleasures experienced by man are owing to the gift of existence from this Almighty Being, and therefore it becomes a clear point, that life itself ought to be deemed a favour and a blessing. But as the understanding opens, it is very natural to search for further information concerning this Being, to whom man is indebted for the gift of life. This leads to an inquiry, whether He has made any discoveries of Himself, or of the purposes for which mankind were placed in the world? A new scene then opens, while man is contemplating the nature of God, reverencing his attributes and perfections, and searching out for his will; whilst he is comparing and combining his own existence with that of others, studying his duty, and in short forming to himself such a system of conduct in the management of this gift of life, as conscience dictates to be just and grateful. That obedience is owing to the Author of our existence is an immediate and necessary consequence; but this can be shown no other way than by an implicit submission to his will, and by a patience and resignation under the allotments of his Providence. It is very certain, that misfortunes and evils may befall a man, which may make him desirous of immediate death; and he has the "power" without doubt of relieving himself: but power is far from always implying "right." A state of dependence requires an attention to the will and pleasure of another, not to our own; and therefore one must be well assured, that it is the will and pleasure of the Superior to receive back the gift he has conferred, before it can be resigned into his hands with due attention to decency, propriety, and obedience.

But the self-murderer, who thinks at all of religion or futurity, replies, that he throws himself on the goodness and benevolence of the Deity both for his passport and pardon. "A good God (says he) gave me life as a blessing; but "if, by a number of untoward accidents, it has proved to me a curse, his "Benevolence can never surely be offended at my seeking to return it quickly
"into

“into his hands.” That the Almighty meant man’s “whole” existence, present and future, to be a blessing to him, can scarce be denied, without lessening His attributes of mercy and justice. But man is often so ignorant of what is really best for him on the whole, and so apt to judge from present circumstances alone, without attention to consequences, as frequently to call his evil good, and his good evil; to mistake the blessing for the curse, and the curse for the blessing. How often is pain itself the forerunner of ease, and sickness of better health! how often do riches owe their superior comforts to the experience of past poverty! how often are the sufferings of poverty the very means of increasing industry and procuring wealth! how does pleasure of all kind receive its zest from the remembrance of past trouble! Present virtues perhaps are owing to former errors; present wisdom to past folly; affliction opens the door to consideration; and painful reflection becomes the parent of future caution, peace, and happiness. But had life been resigned in haste, as a burden and a curse, an end had been put to all subsequent blessings, which might have arisen from present evils, and the condemnation of life had been pronounced without giving it a full and impartial trial. Besides, how often are these untoward circumstances, which put a man so much out of humour with his life, the sole effects of his own follies and vices! of the abuse of that reason and free-will, which was bestowed on him to render life a comfort and a blessing! Is the wisdom then of the Almighty, or his benevolence, to be vainly arraigned for man’s rashness and folly? Are His precious gifts to be ungratefully thrown up and returned into his hands, because those on whom He has been pleased to bestow them will not assign them their just value, or convert them to their proper use? If a gracious Providence be supposed to preside over the world, a man’s life, (he may rest assured) whatever its complexion may be as to present misery or happiness, must be for his benefit in his whole existence present and future, if he make but a proper use of it: but for any one precipitately to rush out of life, is to doubt the power and fostering care of that Providence, under the wings of whose mercy he is at the same time crying out for shelter; is to counteract that very authority, to the exercise of whose goodness he is laying claim; and whilst engaged in an act of open rebellion, to expect the rewards due only to a submissive and obedient subject.

C H A P. III.

The power of enforcing penal laws of the utmost consequence to society: this power evaded by suicide.—The imagined lawfulness of suicide, or what may be stiled its “principle,” an encouragement to the commission of every vice.—An awe of futurity over the minds of the people of great importance to the good order of every state.—The principle of suicide very much depends on defacing the impressions of virtue and religion, and therefore ruinous to the interests of society.—By this principle all fear of God and man is discharged from the mind, and therefore the suicide will not only die “when” he pleases, but live “how” he pleases.—No confidence to be placed, as to any social ties or duties, in one, who will never scruple to become his own executioner.—The principle of suicide gains ground with the cause of scepticism and infidelity; and these unite in subverting the good order of society.—The wealth and prosperity of a nation supposed to depend on its degree of population.—By the practice of suicide every individual decreases the number of citizens, as far as he can, and therefore acts injuriously by the state in his own person.—Every citizen possesses only a joint property in his own life, together with the community to which he belongs: the suicide deserts all his civil duties.—The objection concerning suicide’s being no more than a migration from one’s country, which is allowed to be lawful, proposed and answered.—Suicide injurious to the first principles of society by the assumption of private punishment.—The preservation of the lives of its citizens, the first object of government.—No citizen to be put to death but by the sentence of public justice: suicide is therefore murder in the eye of the law.—The suicide, who has been guilty of no previous offence against the state, offends in thus depriving the state of a citizen; but the guilt of the self-murderer is greatly accumulated when he evades the punishment due to his crimes.—Objection concerning individuals not having a right to give the power of life and death to the magistrate, if they had no such power over themselves, proposed and answered.—Criminals offend against the good order of society by killing themselves before or after condemnation; because one design of punishment is to make a public example in order to deter others.

THE special sinfulness of suicide against God, as the natural and moral Governor of mankind, constituted the first inquiry into its offence, because that part, having less to do with sensible and surrounding objects, may naturally be supposed to have less influence over a perverted and vicious mind. For a similar reason its guilt against the good order of society shall next come into consideration, because social concerns are not so likely to affect a narrow and contracted spirit, and to influence towards the prevention of any crime, as are the personal feelings of self, and its own immediate interests.

Now the good order of society, as well as its essential interests, must be materially affected and injured by an opinion of the lawfulness and expediency of putting an end to life, whenever its possessor is weary of it. Though rewards and punishments are generally considered as the mutual props and supports of every government, yet they are not so in an equal degree; since its greatest security consists in the power of enforcing its own laws, or, in other words, of punishing the refractory and disobedient. When this support is taken away, or its extent and energy diminished, laws become nugatory, and the foundation of all authority is shaken to its center. It is self-evident then, that the abettor of suicide undermines the basis of all civil society, that he defies all threatenings of law and terrors of judicial process, and consequently that the executive authority loses by these means its firmest hold over the decent and regular conduct of its dependents and citizens. But if it can be further proved, that the man who considers suicide as a justifiable expedient to fly from misery, or from the shame of that punishment which his crimes have deserved, will likewise be ready to adopt every opinion which destroys virtue, and to countenance every practice which encourages vice, (when it suits his own temper and inclination) it undeniably follows, that what may be called the "Principle" of suicide, is of a truly dangerous and alarming nature to the good order of all society.

Due impressions of virtue and religion have always been esteemed the most sure and firm basis of social intercourse and social happiness; inasmuch that even those statesmen among the heathens, who, through want of that superior illumination which is now enjoyed, might at times have their doubts on the subject of futurity, were yet very sensible of the necessity of inculcating some notions of religion, and of future rewards and punishments, into the minds
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of the common people, as deeming it the best political security for the practice of those virtues, which are essential to the well-being of every community. It appears, then, that he, who is least influenced in his conduct by a respect for virtue and a reverence for religion, is least likely to promote the good and happiness of his fellow-citizens. But the "Principle" of suicide (or a persuasion, that I may put an end to my life at my own pleasure) cannot be consistently maintained by any one, who has not previously imbibed notions very inconsistent with all serious thoughts of futurity, as a state of reward and punishment for human actions: consequently the principle of suicide is founded on that which tends to subvert the basis of social happiness, viz. a want of religious fear and an awe of futurity.

But some, it may be said, who are ready to cast off all fear of God, are yet influenced in their conduct by the fear of man; of those disgraces and punishments, for instance, which it may be in the power of man to inflict on them. True; but how stands the case with those who imbibe the principle of suicide? Determining that they need not live any longer than seems good to themselves, they think as little of fearing man as God, and therefore put no other restraint on themselves or their actions, than seems to them consistent with their present or future gratifications.—"As I can die when I please, I will live how I please," is the natural deduction from the conceded principle of suicide; and when traced through all its variety of consequences, gives birth to every species of unsocial and immoral conduct.—"I will pursue my projects of ambition to the utmost, and, if unexpectedly stopt short in my career, need not live to feel the shame of a repulse. I will gratify my lust at the expence and honour of my friend and his family; and whenever disagreeable consequences are likely to ensue to myself, the point of my sword can soon put an end to them. I can sport with the property of others in what manner I please, or increase my own by every sinister method; and whenever my frauds are on the eve of discovery, I can fly from justice, shame, and remorse, by the discharge of my pistol. I can satiate myself with revenge on my adversary, and draw the reeking dagger out of "his" heart to plunge it in "my own." Others may talk as they please of "future" happiness or misery; but my "present" appetites are warm and pressing, and shall not yield to such distant uncertainties. I will then gratify my passions of every kind to the
 " utmost

“ utmost, laying them under no further restraint than is necessary to my own convenience; and whenever sources of pleasure fail, or my reputation, my health, my life are endangered, I will fly from the feelings of bodily pain, and spurn the threatenings of human laws:—I will instantly leave that world I can no longer enjoy.” Thus the whole circle of immorality and vice, of public injustice and private injury, may be pursued with a temporary success under the delusion of so false and dangerous a principle. Besides, what trust or confidence can be placed in any man with regard to the ties and duties of his social intercourse, who pays so little attention to himself and to his own life, as to be ready at any time to become his [P] own executioner? How is another man’s life safe in the hands of one who despises his own? However, there is not equal danger of the general prevalence of its principle, as there is experience of its frequent practice. For though some may publicly avow and seek to defend it in principle, yet there is still a general abhorrence of the crime when committed, notwithstanding its so frequent perpetration. It may find a few advocates in theory amid those who term themselves cool and impartial reasoners, but still fewer will be led to its actual perpetration through a trust and confidence in the justness of such a theory; except where it meets with the demon of dejection and melancholy, whose suggestions will be strengthened by a mode of reasoning so consonant to its own sickly feelings. The bulk of suicides owe their self-destruction first and last to the rage and fury of ungoverned passions (not to any deductions of pretended argument on the subject);—to those passions which lead them captive at will, and suffer them to act on “no principle” at all. However, it cannot be amiss cautiously to guard the mind against the possible admission of such a destructive notion, as the lawfulness and innocence of suicide;—a notion, which, it must be confessed, seems gaining ground and spreading its baneful influence under the dark and poisonous shades of scepticism and infidelity. What enemies, therefore, to mankind in general, and to their fellow-citizens in particular, must those alluring and specious sophists be deemed, who in a Christian country seek to justify this deed of horror!

[P] “Qui sibi nequam—cui bonus?” says Augustine.—Ep. ad Dulcitium.

“Quisquis vitam suam contempsit (says Seneca, Ep. iv.) tuæ dominus est.”—“Whoever despises his own life, is master of your’s:”—than which he could not have advanced a stronger argument in discredit of the Principle of Suicide on social accounts, though such was not his intention.

But as its principle tends to subvert the good order of society, so its general practice would put an end to its very being. For if the wealth and prosperity of a nation depend (as they are generally thought to do) on its degree of population, what species of offence, if much yielded to, would more effectually revolt against this source of its riches, or make greater havock among the lives of its citizens? But every individual who commits suicide, does all in his single power to promote the destructive practice; consequently he is a traitor, not only to the general interests and welfare, but even to the very existence, of the community; since with what propriety can he deny that liberty of self-murder to all others, which he assumes to himself?—He is equally guilty, therefore, as if every one followed his example. Yet allowing the existence of the community to be sufficiently guarded, as it certainly is, by the influence of self-preservation on the minds of the multitude, the general interests of society are materially injured, and its fundamental maxims grossly insulted, by the practice of suicide. Obvious and well-known as are the first principles of society, and repeatedly as they have been mentioned by every writer, yet it is necessary (which alone can apologize for their introduction) to have recourse to them here, in order to show the glaring behaviour of the self-murderer, who flies in the face of such plain and simple maxims.

Such, then, (as is well known) is the constitution of civil government, that every one, who wishes to be a partaker of its benefits, must be content to give up a certain portion of his own natural independence. Thus he no longer lives for himself alone, but to fill up a certain station in that community to which he belongs; which having thus a mixt property in his life together with himself, he is no more at liberty voluntarily to desert its service by putting an end to his life, than “a soldier on guard is to quit his post [Q] without leave.” But here an objection is started by some:—“I am at liberty to leave my own country whenever I please, and to reside altogether in another kingdom. “What difference, then, is there in respect to my country’s interests, whether “I retire from my station in this manner, or by suicide? or why am I more “censurable for doing it in one shape than in the other? Am I not equally lost or “dead to my country, and all the services I owe it, either way?” But this liberty

[Q] This allusion has been constantly used by all writers on this subject from the days of Pythagoras to our own, and deserves ever to be mentioned as an apt illustration.

of migration at pleasure is not so absolutely in every citizen's choice, or its innocence in all cases so clearly and generally [R] established, as may at first sight be imagined; consequently it may many times prove an unwarrantable desertion of the post, as well as suicide. Particular bodies of men have a power of restraining their members from quitting their society without previous permission; and the laws of the land issue their inhibitions against migration, on many occasions, both to individuals and bodies of men; and if a few indifferent persons do so far seclude themselves from the protection of their own country and its laws, by a constant residence in another kingdom, as to be entirely lost or dead to their own, their liberty of so doing is not so clear, as it is that the state thinks it a matter of no consequence to claim their future services. It will be said,—“ the state claims them not, because it has no power over such.” True; it has no means, perhaps, of bringing them back to punishment in case of refusal; but defying punishment, or flying out of its reach, is no proof of innocence, or not deserving it.

Another obvious principle of all government is that of transferring the power of punishment out of the hands of individuals into those of public magistrates; by which means the individual resigns all right of self-defence against others, (except in cases of extreme necessity) and of self-punishment in any shape that may affect the interests of society. But the first attention of every good government is towards preserving the lives of all, who live under the protection of its laws. It frequently happens, indeed, that in consequence of this general protection individuals must be put to death for the good of the whole. But as no individual has a right to assume this power of life and death over another on his own private motion, (which would be downright murder) so he has as little authority to exercise it over himself, it being with respect to the state equally murder. For whether it be this or that private citizen who has suffered a violent death, and whether by his own or another's hand, is immaterial to the interests of the community at large: there is a violation of law, an infringement on the rights of public punishment, and the loss of a subject and his services to the state, whenever any citizen suffers a violent death otherwise than by the voice of public justice.

[R] See more of Migration in Part VI. c. ii. Hume, and c. iii. Beccaria.

Here the veil must be drawn aside from those cases, which otherwise might appear to admit of some palliation. For it is evident from the first principles of government, that though this unsocial act be perpetrated under the most favourable interpretation, and in consequence of no direct transgression of any human law, but in weakness of judgment, in forlornness of hope, and in a personal matter only, yet he who commits suicide even under such circumstances, is no better than a betrayer of the first maxims of civil union, a traitor to the cause of society in general, and a deserter of that particular station in it, which he was bound to occupy for the good of the whole: how then can he be innocent, especially as the nature of the action itself excludes all possibility of future satisfaction to the injured rights of the community? But when the self-killin has moreover violated many a good and wholesome regulation of society; when he has corrupted the moral state of the community, as far as he was able, by the degeneracy of his manners; when he has squandered his own patrimony in riotous living, and revelled on the ruin of honest industry; when he has heaped injuries and troubles on the heads of his innocent neighbour, of his private connexions, and family; when he has been oppressive, fraudulent, and vicious in his whole life and conversation, and now begins to tremble at the sword of justice hanging over his head; when under these circumstances, in a paroxysm of guilty fear and despondency, he puts an end to his life, he accumulates the offence of his self-murder by flying from the stroke of public justice, because he thus refuses to make the only atonement in his power to the injured rights of society. The vicious suicide, then, not only renders no actual service of a good citizen to his country by his mode of life, but fills it with the contagious impression of his evil example; not only spurns its wholesome regulations while living, but defies its censure and mocks its authority by the manner and in the moment of his death. The general principles of social union being thus grossly violated and insulted by every self-murderer, the community is justified in inflicting all the subsequent censure and reprobation in its power, to repair the injuries which its rights have sustained, in order to deter others from imitating the dreadful practice.

But an objection occurs again:—"You say I must not punish myself with death, because I have given up that right to the laws and the magistrate. But I could not give up to another a power I never possessed in myself: either, therefore,

“ therefore, the magistrate has no power to punish with death, or every individual possessed originally a right over his own life.” It would be entering on a wide field to determine all the powers of government, or to distinguish precisely the modes of their acquisition; but thus much it may suffice to observe in answer to the present objection. When an individual suffers any attack so sudden as to prevent his application for legal protection, so violent as to put his life or valuable property in danger, he must have immediate recourse to his own natural strength and powers for assistance; and if in defending himself, he necessarily puts his assailant to death, the action is innocent and justifiable in the eye of law. Now it is this natural defence of himself, which the individual transfers to the magistrate, at such times as it is “ not necessary” for himself to use it; that is, when the attack made on his life and property is of a nature capable of his seizing the offender, and bringing him to public justice. It is not, therefore, any power over his own life, that the individual transfers into the hand of the magistrate, but that power over another man’s life forfeited into his hands by some violent proceeding of the delinquent. The right of every man to defend himself against the violence of another cannot be denied; the power of alienating this right to the collective body of citizens, acting through their laws and magistracy, must be approved, as tending to the more equal and disinterested distribution of justice: all which may establish the right of the magistrate to inflict capital punishment, but has nothing to do with the case of suicide, or with establishing the original power of a man over his own life. But as we claim the protection of society for ourselves, so having in return agreed to assign over every delinquent to the decision and sentence of law, we cannot resume that delegated power at pleasure in order to punish others, or even ourselves, but must be governed in all things by the awards of those laws under whose protection we live. This, therefore, leaves no room, as some have imagined, for relieving ourselves by previous self-murder from any sentence of infamy which our conduct may have deserved. If it be said further, “ that the only aim of the state is to get rid of a pernicious citizen, “ and that, therefore, it may as well be done on the eve of, or after, condemnation, by our own hands, as by those of another person;” it may be answered, that the example of suffering is also one great part of the design of punishment; and in proportion as we fly from the exemplariness of a patient submission, we fly from the execution of such justice as is due to our crimes,

as well as from the only means in our power to make any reparation. This is, therefore, to act with the greatest degree of injustice to society; since not only before our deaths by our crimes, but in the very act of dying by self-murder, we show an utter contempt for the benefits and principles of social union: not to mention further here, (as having been fully disclosed at the entrance of this chapter) the excessive danger that would accrue to the general and particular interests of society, were it understood or laid down as a principle, that a man was at liberty to destroy himself, as soon as there was any hazard of a discovery and punishment of his crimes. It is sometimes further urged; "Suppose I should be engaged in a conspiracy to dethrone an usurper, to restore my country to liberty, or in some other great and virtuous design, but which required secrecy and concealment to render it effectual; suppose I should be seized, and either being threatened with racks and tortures, or buoyed up with hopes of my own pardon, should be fearful of having my resolution shaken, and so far overcome as to be in danger of discovering the best friends of the people and worthiest characters of the state as my accomplices; would it not be safer, more honourable, and even a point of duty, to put a speedy end to my own life, in order to avoid all possibility of treachery to my friends, or to the interests of my country?" To save one's own life by betraying another not more guilty than ourselves, is mean and despicable; to lay down one's own life rather than expose a friend, is an action seemingly deserving of applause; to lay it down for one's country's good merits an high degree of approbation; but so many other circumstances must be taken into the case here mentioned, and its occurrence would be so rare, that though some particular instance might allow of favourable interpretation, yet it could have nothing to do with establishing any general defence of the practice of flying by self-murder from the stroke of public justice: which, however, has been the artful and shrewd purport of its mention by Hume [s] and others.

[s] See Part VI. c. ii. on Hume.

C H A P. I V.

The whole community linked together by one common chain of union; but the loss of any individual more immediately felt within his own circle.—The flying by suicide from the reparation of any injury more completely felt, when the suicide is committed in consequence of private rather than of public crimes; because the injustice is diffused in the latter case, but presses hard on particular persons in the former.—The “principle” of suicide must always destroy domestic peace and security.—No man can have a parental or conjugal feeling left, who flies to suicide as his own shelter from poverty and ruin, and leaves his family more keenly exposed to the same by his abrupt death.—To be fatherless or a widow sufficiently forlorn of itself, without the aggravation of becoming so by the most unnatural means.—A great consolation in grief to be able to dwell on the praises of the friend we have lost; to reflect on our strict union, &c. but these sources of comfort effectually cut off by the suicide, who shows how little he cared for that family, on whom he has voluntarily brought so much misery.—Though a spotless mind cannot participate the “guilt,” yet it may the “shame,” of an evil action committed by one in near connexion: the crime of suicide therefore highly aggravated by piercing the heart of innocence with poignant distress.—Objection. “My very view in suicide is “to “relieve” my injured family from the further evil effects of my follies and “vices.” This answered.—A man who is led to commit suicide through affliction and trouble brought on him by others, equally deserts all his private duties of life.—While there is room for exerting a single act of benevolence, or a friendly office, a man should live for the sake of others.

THE perpetrator of suicide not only breaks, as far as he is able, those general bonds of union, which connect mankind together in all the advantages and blessings of society, but is still more guilty in tearing asunder those closer ties of intercourse by which individuals are more intimately united, and become more dependent on each other for mutual happiness. Various are the adjustments, the springs, and wheels of social union; but all are so chained and linked together, that the most trivial and insignificant movement cannot be

be out of order, without contributing its share of confusion to some part of the whole community. Though the loss of an individual, and especially of a worthless one, cannot be materially felt in the large scale of the "whole" body, yet it may heavily affect the partial and confined circle in which that individual moved; and consequently the self-murderer's guilt is not only against the good order of society in general, but is highly aggravated by the evils he brings on those, who have the misfortune of his connexion. Does a man apply to his own avenging sword on the discovery of his having embezzled the public money—the crime, indeed, is great and heinous against the state on a double account; as well for the fraud committed, as for the flight from public justice; but the loss of property occasioned by such a treachery is less severely felt by individuals. But if any one seeks to cover his shameless head from infamy and punishment by the commission of suicide, after having betrayed the confidence of private trust, after having proved himself an unjust steward of charitable donations, a squanderer of the deposit of friendship, a perfidious guardian of the possessions of the orphan, a fraudulent dealer, an evader of the payment of just debts, a forger on the property of others;—as individuals suffer more severely by these breaches of private faith, so is the enormity of his crime increased and multiplied upon him. He makes a sudden and violent retreat from all possibility of reparation, and by so doing forfeits also his own private property to the disappointment and loss of his injured creditors, many of whom are, perhaps, brought into the utmost distress and ruin by their misplaced confidence in his integrity and honour. But if his effects be not forfeited, it is more owing to the exertions of clemency and humanity in behalf of the living sufferers, than to the merits, or attention, or prudence, or virtue of the deceased.

But there are links of still closer connexion, which, while there is a spark of generosity or humanity left, must make the soul of him, who is on the verge of self-murder, shrink back from its execution. These are the ties of consanguinity, the claims of friendship, the important rights, the powerful and affectionate endearments of a family. As the principle of suicide was found in the last chapter to be so detrimental to the interests and security of society in general, so must an avowed opinion of its expediency and lawfulness be a dreadful bar to domestic peace and security. What anxieties, what mistrusts and forebodings must it ever occasion in the breast of a friend or parent, a child

child or wife, who knows or but suspects its influence over the mind of one with whom there is so close an union! All confidence and security is banished; his absence is a rack and torture, which is but ill exchanged for his presence, whenever the gloom of melancholy sits brooding on his countenance. Nay, his very smile of complacency may be often deemed deceitful, as serving but the better to conceal the bloody purposes of his heart. In short, when affairs go not smoothly on, when disappointment ruffles the temper, when views of interest or ambition are crossed and baffled, then the point of the sword is ever glittering before the eyes, or the fancied report of the pistol bursting on the ears, of her, who wishes to prove herself the affectionate partner of his sorrows, who would fain redouble her attentions to sooth his melancholy, and to prevent, if possible, the impending blow. Whilst he yet lives then, but admits the expediency and lawfulness of suicide, he plants a perpetual dagger of uneasiness and restless terror in the breast of every one with whom he is connected. Yet if a man has denied his family the just resources of industry, or has squandered the rich gifts of birth and fortune in scenes of dissipation, vice, and gambling, and is now veering apace to the point of ruin—can he have a paternal or conjugal feeling left, if he think only of escaping himself from the miseries of shame and poverty by a deprivation of life, and of exposing his helpless and innocent family to all those horrors? What shameful cowardice! what a prostitution of all principle! Difficult, indeed, as the task may be, to recall himself back to the paths of sobriety and honest industry, yet the more he has already injured the interests of a family by a contrary conduct, the more he is bound in honour to make the attempt: which if he refuse to do, and thus basely and for ever desert their cause, by that very act he lays an heavy burden of additional guilt on himself. To be fatherless or a widow, is in general a situation of itself sufficiently forlorn and deplorable;—it needs no aggravations. But suddenly to become so by the immediate hands of that very person, who was bound by every law of justice, duty, affection, and interest, to protect these sharers of his fame, his fortunes, and his life, from experiencing the same, is a circumstance so unnatural and horrid in itself, as greatly to enhance the sorrows of the state, and consequently the guilt of that action which occasioned it. This guilt, heinous as it is, is yet capable of one aggravating circumstance, by which it is heightened into the extreme of cruelty; and that is, by the moment sometimes embraced for the

commission of the self-murder; when it is done within the hearing, or in the presence of, or so as to be first discovered by, that very person, whom it is sure to affect most deeply: this shocks humanity, but is not unfrequently practised.

The remembrance of virtue is ever precious. It is a consolation in grief, and brings us sooner than any thing to a complacency under trouble. It is a delight to dwell on the praises of the friend we have lost. The sound of his good name is grateful in our ears; we feel a secret satisfaction, a conscious pride in our having lived in intimacy and close union with such a praise-worthy character. But what comfort can be found to sooth the sorrows of the fatherless and widow in the reflection on what brought them into that wretched condition! or where is there room for consolation, when the self-murderer showed by his shameful desertion of their cause, how little he cared for them, for his own fame, his fortunes, or his life! that he lived for himself alone, and to follow his own purposes; and when he found that these failed of success, so that he could no longer be what he had been,—in the rage of disappointment, the forebodings of fear, and timid workings of despair, he determined no longer to be at all. Though a liberal and generous mind, when spotless itself, cannot partake of the “guilt,” yet it may be very sensibly affected in its nicest feelings by the “shame” of an evil action committed by one in a near degree of connexion. The crime of suicide is therefore highly aggravated, whenever it brings distress on the undeserving, and pierces the heart of innocence with affliction and misery.

But it may be urged, that sorrow and shame for having brought distress, poverty, and ruin on an affectionate and worthy family, is the very cause that sometimes [T] produces suicide.—“I have brought indigence and distress on
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[T] A question has been put—“I am involved in debt, and under the persecution of creditors.
“ I tenderly love my wife and family. Her jointure is considerable, but whilst I live, its annual
“ produce is subject to my incumbrances. She deserves not to suffer for my extravagance. She is
“ now subject to penury, from which I can instantly relieve her, and place my family again in ease
“ and affluence:—if I put an end to my life, she will then immediately be mistress of her own fortune.
“ Am I not then bound in tenderness to her and my family to kill myself?” As this person only proposes the happiness of another, whom he has injured, as the ground of his suicide, he deserves an answer. In the first place, that wife must little deserve his love, who “could” be restored to any peace and happiness by such a sacrifice:—in the next “however we may be wrapped up in our own
family-

“ the innocent partners of my fortunes. They would prosper better without me. I only live to be the squanderer of their income, the destroyer of their peace, the imbitterer of all their happiness. How can I appear again in the presence of those whom I have so much injured? Their assiduities and attentions sting me to the heart, and are worse to bear than their severest upbraidings would be; their silent endearments are the keenest reproaches, they speak bitterness to my soul, and I must instantly relieve myself and them from future misery.” But is it from future misery they “will” be relieved by such an action of despair? No surely; but rather plunged deeper in affliction. It is holding forth an apparent, but deceitful, remedy, by which he proposes to do good to others, but is in reality only relieving himself from the pangs of present disquietude: he cannot bear reflexion, and he flies from future exertion. But if one, who argues thus on the propriety of his own murder, would but pause a moment, and consider, what might be the probable result of a contrary determination; would he but resolve from henceforward to be the murderer of his vices rather than of himself, what comfort, joy, and happiness might it yet be in his power to receive from his innocent family, as well as to confer upon them!

But supposing it not from the effects and consequences of vice and depravity, but from trouble and affliction, from unmerited poverty, from loss of friends, from ungrateful and base conduct of relatives, that any one seeks relief in suicide, yet still he deserts his own duties in life, and instead of exercising that patience and exerting that activity which would become his situation, he gives way to a lethargic despondency, which at length puts an end to every good as well as disagreeable prospect of his life. Why should he look on the dark side only, and yield to every gloomy and melancholic impression? His affairs, his thoughts, may take a different and a better turn, if he strive for the mastery; and the good fortune and happiness of the succeeding year may compensate for the evils and wretchedness of the present. But supposing the worst, yet reflection, benevolence, and sensibility for others, should prevail over mere self-sufferings. If, then, there be a friend to lament his wretched fall, a father

family-concerns, they ought never to lead us to neglect any duties we owe to society at large. We are to be honest and just in all our dealings with others; but how is that man so, who would defraud his creditors to enrich his family?

to weep over his untimely grave, a mother, whose life may depend on his for support, a child to be made fatherless, or a wife a widow; in short, if there be one person in the world, whose property, interests, feelings, he knows will be hurt by his depriving himself of life, he ought not to cut that person off from the fruits of that industry, the benefit of that advice, the soothing of that friendship, the endearments of that affection, the tenderness of that love, the advantages of that protection, and the exertions of that benevolence, which may be justly claimed at his hands.

C H A P. V.

The question to be resolved is, whether, all rights of society and individuals apart, a solitary being, who is full of wretchedness and misery, may not destroy himself?—He cannot set aside the claim of the Almighty over his life; nor does he even consult his own interest by his suicide.—It would seem absurd to caution any one to preserve his life “for his own sake,” did not experience justify the necessity.—An action which respects self alone generally to be suspected; degrading energy of the word “Selfish.”—Suicide always committed on selfish principles; but if it does not promote, but hurt, self-interest, it is not only ignoble, but weak, treacherous, and ineffectual.—A man’s interests can be but of two sorts, either in this world or the next.—Interest in this world not promoted, but terminated, by suicide; the best expected from it is a total insensibility to this world’s pleasures or pains.—The suicide can never feel the good effects of his being freed from pain; but knows not of how much future pleasure in life he may deprive himself.—The final effects of worldly wishes or actions too deep to be explored by human penetration.—No man’s life ought to be pronounced miserable before he is arrived at the “natural” end of his days.—Suicide, therefore, as it cannot promote, so it may materially injure, self-interest in this world.—But the suicide is willing to resign all future prospects of happiness in this life, and to plunge into annihilation to get rid of present misery.—Annihilation is a gloomy and preposterous idea, but seems the best the suicide can rest his action upon.—An awe of Futurity the only powerful argument

ment against suicide.—Where this is wanting, there is an end of patience, resignation, &c.—The suicide apt to think, that he gets rid of his “Existence” because he gets rid of his mortal life; but the idea absurd.—The question, “how does suicide affect self-interest in another world?” seems already answered, by its having been proved to be an offence against God, as our Creator and moral Governor; and will be further answered in the next chapter, concerning its peculiar offence against Christian Doctrines.—The suicide hurts his future interests by the “manner” of his death.—However innocent before, we make ourselves guilty aggressors; when, to avoid temporal affliction, we plunge into the hazard of eternal misery.—Suicide consults no interest of man.—Its special guilt accumulated on account of the “many duties” against which it offends.—The defenders of suicide apt to consider it in one light only, and in that which best suits their own purpose: argue too generally from a few pitiable instances to an extensive warrant of its practice.—Suicide (like other crimes) admits of extenuation or aggravation; we must be acquainted with all circumstances, before its proportion of guilt in any particular individual can be ascertained.—No general conclusions to be drawn in its favour from a few particular instances: every one would be ready to claim the exception in his own case.—Any toleration of it would reach to almost every instance of its danger; since no one could dispute another’s feelings.—No action whose bad consequences should be more generally insisted on than suicide, because any partial allowance would be universally extended.—This affords an answer to that specious argument, “When useless to society, burdensome to friends, and wretched in myself, is it not lawful to quit life?”—If this be answered in the affirmative, many an one might be easily led to conceive himself to be in this situation; but if in the negative, and it should be replied, “How then am I to support such a load of trouble?” the means and the comforts are to be drawn from Religion.

“**W**HEN all the ties of sentiment and affection, which attach the heart to this world, are, by a variety of untoward circumstances, dissolved or torn asunder; when I am a forlorn and solitary being, whom wretchedness alone accompanies, and to whom life is become a burden,—why should I not deliver myself from so much misery, by putting an immediate end to my existence?” This is the question now to be resolved;—whether, the rights of society apart, the claims of consanguinity, affinity, or friendship, none, such

such a detached individual has a right over his own life, to dispose of it at pleasure, or whether he consults self-interest in so doing? As to any right; the claim of the Almighty over his life still remains entire, nor can be set aside; and as to his self-interest in the matter, it shall now be fully considered. It may be said in a word, that if to murder any one be doing him the greatest injury, what greater injury can a man be supposed to do to himself than to take away his own life? But as he does it voluntarily, he supposes, at least, that it must be better for him to die, and that by his own hand, than to live any longer. The present inquiry then is, (not by what steps his mind can have been led to form so rash a conclusion, since these have been pointed out in former chapters, but) how this determination affects himself and his own interests?

It must once more be repeated, that nature has so deeply implanted and inwoven in our frame a love of life, that it should seem almost an unnecessary task to seek to urge its influence over any man; to caution any one to love himself, to take care of himself, and to preserve his own life: and yet there are various ways by which men counteract this impulse of nature. When present pleasures, indeed, are opposed to the distant evils that may result from their gratification, it is matter of but small surprize, that weak and ill-judging men should often neglect all thoughts of the future to enjoy what is before them; and thus should give themselves up to the unbounded indulgence of such sensual appetites, as are acknowledged to be productive of much bodily pain and disease, and to hasten the approaches of death. This, though a kind of self-destruction, a lingering sort of suicide, manifestly opposing the substantial interests of man, and therefore in every moral light highly censurable, yet is foreign to the purport of the present inquiry; wherein it is simply to be considered, how that sudden and irrevocable act of violence, by which a man in his senses voluntarily puts an end to his mortal existence—how it affects his own immediate interests?

An action is generally to be suspected, which is founded on the petty concerns and interests of self alone; such an one is seldom noble, generous, or manly, because it is not disinterested; in short, there is a degrading energy (which is well understood) in the word "Selfish." Now as the intention and accomplishment of suicide begins, centers, and ends in self, it is of a suspicious and unmanly nature; if, besides, it can be proved not to promote self-interest,

It is not only ignoble and ungenerous in its principle, but foolish, weak, and ineffectual in its practice, as not accomplishing its own views. And if, moreover, it not only fails in its selfish purposes, but hurts those very interests it would fain advance, it is not only vain and simple, but treacherous also and deceitful, by leaving its perpetrator in a worse state than it found him. In obedience, then, to those very principles, which first set him to work, (viz. the views of self-interest) any one, instead of indulging thoughts of suicide, should utterly discard them, as tending to derange and destroy, not to forward and promote, his real interests. The points then to be proved are these;—that suicide, though acknowledged to be selfish in its principle, does not promote self-interest; that it hurts it; and consequently that no man ought, “for his own sake,” to apply to it, especially as it is a dernier resort from which he can make no future retreat.

Now a man's concerns and interests can be but of two sorts, either with this world or the next. It is certain, that the destroyer of himself promotes no interest of his own in this world, since he disdains all future connexion with it. He allows no room for amendment of situation, but precipitately and effectually flies from all life's concerns; he does not strive to untie the knot of his trouble, but rashly cuts it through; he leaps into a wide and bottomless sea, where he is sure to be drowned, rather than keeps close in that vessel which might enable him to weather out the storm. The utmost advantage that he can hope to attain by such an action is a total insensibility to pain or pleasure, a negative kind of ease, a mere privation of misery, a burial of cares, and fears, and sorrows, in the deep silence of the grave. It is, indeed, a melancholy reflection, that any one should ever be brought into such a state of mind or fortune, as that “Hope” should be so far dead in him, as to make him think at all of getting rid of life! that he should ever come to consider death, as a relief from misery [u] rather than as a pain and punishment. But if he obtain a cessation from present pain and sorrow, by procuring his own death, yet what is this quiet, this peace, to one, who cannot feel its good effects; who has deprived himself of the power of experiencing any of its enjoyments? And if

[u] “In luctu atque miseriis mortem ærumnarum requiem, non cruciatum esse; eam cuncta mor-
“ talium mala dissolvere, ultra neque curæ neque gaudio locum esse,” are Cæsar's words in Sallust,
and their purport seems adopted by many a modern suicide of like Epicurean principles.

he

he thus preclude himself from present uneasiness, how can he be satisfied, that he does not also cut himself off from such future pleasures in this life (it is not meant here to refer him to another) as would compensate for his present sufferings, if not outweigh the sum of them? How is he sure, that it is not appointed for him to sail through these troubled seas and waters of affliction, as his only passage into some safe harbour of ease, prosperity, and happiness? It is a matter of frequent experience, how some particular situation in life is coveted; an introduction, perhaps, to some one family or person, as a circumstance that must unavoidably lead to the improvement of a man's fortune and happiness. The point is gained; and in the course of events that man finds reason to date the first moments of misery from the completion of his own desires: whilst another feels the keen edge of some extraordinary trouble, which he judges it to be impossible should ever leave him; and yet such a chain of consequences ensues, as gives him reason to rejoice in his former [x] sufferings. How often, perhaps, has the person now determined on suicide, as earnestly coveted and prayed for life's continuance in former periods of his existence, as he is now seeking its dissolution! yet if his desires had not then been granted, he had escaped all the pain and torture, both of body and mind, which has since fallen to his lot, and has led him to embrace this desperate remedy. Indeed the final effects of our own wishes or actions, or of those events which befall us, are much too wonderful and deep to be explored by the eye of human penetration. Our good and our evil are often intimately connected, and tread close on the heels of each other. To say, therefore, on the sore pressure of any evil, "I will live no longer, because I must always be miserable," is to determine hastily and ignorantly on a most important concern; is even to question the power of the Almighty to free man from trouble; and, in short, is to fly to an action, which irrevocably excludes all hope and possibility of a change for the better. But as the oracle of old declared, "that no man should be pronounced happy before his death, on account of the vicissitudes of fortune to which he must be exposed;" so no man's life, for like reasons, ought to be pronounced completely miserable, till he has lived to the "natural" end of his days. Self-murder, therefore, on its principle of consulting self-interest "here," must be deemed weak and ineffectual in its practice, because were its perpetrator enabled

[x] "Our proper bliss depends on what we blame."——POPE.

afterwards

afterwards to live out the full length of his days, he would often find, of how much happiness he had deprived himself by shortening those days.

But it is urged—"I feel myself to be miserable ^{at} present, what then if I am content to sleep in peace for ever; to give up all future prospects of happiness in this world, in order to be freed from my present painful sensations! If I feel nothing after I get rid of life, I am at least delivered from a world of present woe, and that is to be placed to the aggregate of happiness."—Annihilation is a gloomy [v] and preposterous idea, and yet, perhaps, is the most favourable one that can be fostered by a suicide; since were Annihilation certainly to take place on the discharge of a pistol, the self-murderer might urge many an argument in his own justification (as far as self alone is concerned) which it would be difficult to refute. He, who is determined to put an end to his life, no longer fears what man can do to him; and if he have also persuaded himself out of all fear of God, why should he live to suffer upon earth, when he has met with disappointments and losses which have driven him to despair; when he has committed crimes which would bring him to shame and punishment; when he is overwhelmed with bodily pain or mental affliction, of which he sees no end? Suicide may be branded as a criminal action with regard to society, as an injurious one to a family; reason may be employed against its advocate on the absurdity of what he is about to commit, yet what does he care either for reproach or argument, who is of opinion that death not only cancels all human obligations, but disperses all future apprehensions! who effectually secures himself from all punishment here,

[v] Its absurdity is copiously set forth by Young in his Night Thoughts, Night VII. He shows it to be the infidel's wish and only ground of hope and consolation in the career of his wickedness.

"Nature's "first wish" is endless happiness;

"Annihilation is an after-thought,

"A monstrous wish, unborn till Virtue dies;

"And—oh what depth of horror lies inclos'd!

"For non-existence no man ever wish'd,

"But first he wish'd the Deity destroy'd."

Again,

"Guilt only makes Annihilation gain.

"Blest scheme! which life deprives of comfort, death

"Of hope; and which vice only recommends."

and trusts he shall escape with like impunity hereafter! The dread of futurity, therefore, is the only powerful argument to be enforced against suicide, without which it will be difficult to restrain the impetuosity and urgency [z] of desperate feelings; and even with which a man is too frequently tempted to run at hazard the race of eternity. But where this dread of futurity is wanting, there is an end of the interests of morality. The strong holds of contentment, patience, resignation, and virtue, which are built wholly on the rock of future rewards and punishments, fall to the ground, if their foundation fail, while suicide rears its head, and thrives amid the ruins. But these wretched sophists deceive themselves in their application of the word "existence." They may put an end to their mortal lives, but their whole existence is of a different nature;

[z] Well known as is the following passage, it is trusted its quotation here will not be deemed impertinent.

"To be or not to be—that is the question.
 "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind, to suffer
 "The stings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 "Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 "And by opposing end them?—to die—to sleep—
 "No more; and by a sleep we say to end the
 "Heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
 "That flesh is heir to;—'tis a consummation
 "Devoutly to be wish'd. To die—to sleep—
 "To sleep? perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub—
 "For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
 "When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
 "Must give us pause. There's the respect,
 "That makes calamity of so long life.
 "For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
 "Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
 "The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,
 "The insolence of office, and the spurns
 "That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
 "When he himself might his quietus make
 "With a bare bodkin? who would fardles bear
 "To groan and sweat under a weary life?
 "But that the dread of something after death
 "(That undiscovered country from whose bourne
 "No traveller returns) puzzles the will;
 "And makes us rather bear those ills we have
 "Than fly to others that we know not of."——HAMLET.

and it is to the last degree absurd and impious to imagine, that a dependent creature [A] could thus at pleasure thwart the designs and evade the will of his great Creator. Yet in their eagerness to get rid of present misery, they lose sight of distant objects, of the "whole" period of existence; and thinking themselves only born to live a while, to suffer and to die, they forget their concern in that immortality into which they so precipitately rush.

For what if there should be a future state, how does suicide affect self-interest under that prospect? This question seems already answered, in its having been proved to be an offence against God, both as our natural and moral Governor, and as He regards our actions done in society; and it will also be proved in the next Part to be especially repugnant to the principles and precepts of the Christian Revelation: and therefore, on the whole, it must be of essential detriment to our happiness hereafter. But it may be further urged here, that the self-murderer's future interests are peculiarly hurt by the "manner" of his death. It was impetuous and rash, and committed, probably, in the height of despair on some vicious disappointment. These are very unfavourable circumstances in which to quit this life, and enter on another. Such a sudden change would be truly undesirable, were we forced into it by the murderous hands of another: but how is all that is alarming in it increased and aggravated by being voluntary on our parts—by murdering ourselves! To live in vicious habits is at all times hazardous with respect to our future concerns; to die in the same is grievous, but to commit a fresh sin by the very mode of dying, is the height of absurdity, folly, and wickedness. But viewing things in the most favourable light, and supposing that innocent sufferings alone have preyed on the spirits, and introduced that dejection and melancholy, which is ever ready to harbour the most gloomy ideas, to dwell on the worst side of things, and to give them

- [A] " Or if thou covet death, as utmost end
 " Of misery, so thinking to evade
 " The penalty pronounced, doubt not but God
 " Hath wiselier arm'd his vengeful ire than so
 " To be forefall'd; much more I fear, lest death
 " So snatch'd will not exempt us from the pain
 " We are by doom to pay; rather such acts
 " Of contumacy will provoke the Highest
 " To make death in us live."

ADAM's reply to EVE's advice of killing themselves. Par. Lost, B. X.

up as irretrievable, yet is it not a wretched resource to fly to suicide for relief? Is it not seemingly to doubt the power of God, either to alleviate our sorrows here, or to reward our patient endurance of them hereafter? Do we not in this case (however innocent before) become guilty aggressors; and in order to shorten transitory affliction, run the hazard of plunging into eternal misery? Thus does suicide militate as much against self-interest both here and hereafter, as it does against the authority of God, the good order of society, and the happiness of individuals. Since, therefore, no interests are forwarded or supported by its commission, but on the contrary "all" are hurt by it, and it is, moreover, the frequent effect and conclusion of a most vicious life, its guilt must needs be pronounced both special and enormous.

But though the special guilt of suicide has been separately established on the grounds of its offence against natural impulse, against God, Society, and Self, yet it must be considered as receiving an high, additional aggravation, from combining together so many distinct causes of criminality. For if to sin against our nature be one species or symptom of guilt; to rebel against the authority of God be another; to offend against the rules and good order of society another; to injure individuals and family another; to hurt our own essential interests another;—then the guilt of that action which is great in offending against any one of these separately, must be magnified many degrees in transgressing them all at once: but this is, generally speaking, done in the case of suicide. It may likewise be observed, that its defenders are apt to consider it in one of these lights only, as it best suits their purpose; so that if they can prove a man to hold a life so burdensome to "himself," as to make him wish to get rid of it, they argue for the propriety of his so doing on the grounds of self alone, without entering into other particulars relative to the other parts of his duty: whereas it must first be proved, that he is under no obligation of living on other accounts, as well as merely on his own, before the innocence of his suicide can be fully established. The same sort of defenders are likewise apt to argue too generally from some few instances, which may appear pitiable, or not culpable in the extreme, to a more extensive warrant of its practice than such partial examples can justify. Suicide, like most other crimes, may be attended with circumstances, which will abate or aggravate the guilt of its commission. It is therefore necessary to inquire, what particular duties, public

or private, were deserted by this action? what claims of honesty, affection, or friendship, were defrauded? what degree of loss or affliction was brought on a family? what reproach was liable to be cast on the calling or profession to which the self-murderer belonged? what peculiar infamy was merited by himself? what contempt might be thrown on morality, or what discredit on religion, through his rash end? since these and many other incidental circumstances must all be weighed in the balance, before it can be decided with propriety and justice concerning the proportionate degree of guilt in any individual's suicide. Some may be so worn down through excess of affliction and corporal misery, they may appear to be so useless, and even burdensome, to society and their families, and their cases, upon the whole, may seem so extraordinary, as to make them objects of as much pity as censure in their suicide; from effecting which (if so inclined) nothing but the strongest sense of religion can deter them. But from a few such uncommon cases no general conclusions can be drawn in its favour. For if it be once allowed, that a man under the pressure of a certain degree of misery may relieve himself from it by suicide, each individual inclined to commit it will easily persuade himself, through the instigation of disappointed passions, or of melancholy and despair, that his case is amid the number of exceptions to the general censure. Thus would the idea of its toleration reach to every instance almost in which there is danger of its commission; since every man must be allowed to be the best judge of his own feelings—and who could dispute with him their susceptibility?

There is no action then whose general bad consequences ought to be more insisted on than those of suicide; since there is no action, whose innocence being ever allowed in any case, would be more indiscriminately extended by the unhappy and miserable to include their own cases. This may suffice for an answer to that common and specious argument, "When I am become useless to society, a burden to my friends, and completely wretched in myself, is it not my duty to exonerate the community from an heavy weight, to relieve my affectionate relations from an expensive charge, and to rescue myself from a continuation of pain and misery, by the refuge of suicide?" Answer but this in the affirmative, and it becomes an almost general licence for every man to commit suicide at pleasure. For how many lead lives at all times useless (if not pernicious) to society, and burdensome to their friends! Add then but some sudden

sudden reverse in their fortunes, some attack of severe illness or remorse of conscience, and they immediately fall under the above description; when, on these grounds of exemption from the general censure, there needs nothing but a little resolution in themselves to claim the indulgence and privilege of suicide. But answer this question in the negative, and if it be further urged, "How then am I to support such a complication of misery arising from a sense of feeling for my friends as well as myself?" the reply is easy; that having led a life hitherto useless and burdensome to others, your present sufferings should be considered as a means afforded you of opening your eyes to a conviction of what is right; and, should a recovery of health and strength and vigour of mind follow, of inclining your heart to make all the reparation in your power for the injustice and iniquity of your former life. But should your disorders be irremediable, you might be enabled by a patient endurance of present sufferings, and a submissive expectation of the stroke of death, to wipe off a considerable portion of future punishment. But if your previous life has been useful to mankind, honest and benevolent in its principle, affectionate and attentive to the interests of your friends and family, their assiduities will be readily and cheerfully contributed to give you all possible relief under your present afflictions; and being free from the pangs of inward remorse, the pure and solid comforts of religion administer such a portion of inward peace and serenity, as wonderfully contributes to blunt the edge of pain and misery, from the hope, the certainty, which the soul entertains, of extraordinary reward for the patient endurance [B] of unmerited sufferings.

[B] Religion, when rightly managed, is in every sense a "perfrugium miseris."

END OF THE SECOND PART.

PART

P A R T III.

GREAT ACCUMULATION BOTH OF THE GENERAL AND SPECIAL GUILT OF
SUICIDE ON "CHRISTIAN" PRINCIPLES.

C H A P. I.

No immediate prohibition of suicide by name in the Bible, except it be implied in the sixth Commandment.—A general prohibition, "to do no murder," must extend to a man's killing himself, as well as his neighbour; since, in either case, when done without legal authority, it is murder.—Objection concerning the precepts of the second Table respecting our duty to our neighbour only, answered.—These precepts were intended to provide for the general security and happiness of our neighbour.—Actions, which primarily regard self, may yet materially affect our neighbour's peace; of such sort is self-murder; and therefore it may be forbidden here, as being injurious to our neighbour as well as ourselves.—Not sufficient that a killing be voluntary on the part of the person killed, in order to render it no offence against this precept.—General line of duty to our neighbour is, "to do as we would be done by, and to love him as ourselves."—If at liberty to kill ourselves by this commandment, we may kill our neighbour also, whom we are not obliged to treat "better" than we treat ourselves; but such killing of our neighbour is prohibited in the first acknowledged sense of the precept, and therefore the other is restrained by it also.—Man made in the image of God, and therefore not to be murdered, either by himself or another.—We are at liberty, from our Saviour's own example, to extend the moral precepts of the Jewish Law under the Gospel Dispensation, and from thence to conclude, that murder of every sort, whether of self or another, is virtually prohibited under the sixth Commandment.—The whole
scope

scope and tenour of the Gospel contains one uniform argument against self-murder, though it no where prohibits it by name: from the certainty it reveals of a future state; from its being a state of reward and punishment; consequently this a life of probation, which implies a life of patient endurance; from an assurance of God's providential care over man, and all human concerns; on which care we are to rely in dangers and difficulties.—All the revelations, admonitions, and precepts of the Gospel, are so many clear demonstrations of the sinfulness of self-murder, though not specially named in scripture.—Many acknowledged sins not named in scripture, but clearly prohibited by implication.—Gaming one instance of this sort.—A note in Hume's *Essay on Suicide* relative to, "how suicide is affected by the precepts of Christianity," produced at large; in which he maintains, "that there is not a single text of scripture which prohibits it, and that the Christian and the Heathen have exactly the same liberty to commit it."—These points refuted, by appeal to the general tenour of the Gospel-precepts; by showing how different is the state of an Heathen and Christian with regard to their degrees of illumination in points of moral duty; and that therefore, though suicide were not prohibited in the Gospel, yet the Christian must judge more pertinently of things than the Heathen.—If, therefore, suicide were lawful in an Heathen, it might not be so in a Christian; but if unlawful in an Heathen, how much more so in a Christian.—No argument can be raised in favour of suicide from its not being forbidden by name in scripture.—There is no express commandment about self-preservation, any more than about self-destruction.—The practical precepts of the Gospel concern a general regulation of the passions, and a resignation to the Divine will; to both which nothing can be more opposite than the spirit of suicide.

THE inexpediency and unlawfulness of suicide on all grounds of reason, of social and moral duty, and of natural religion, having been established in the foregoing chapters, inquiry shall be made in the present, how the subject is affected by that revelation of his Divine will, which it has pleased the Almighty to bestow on mankind. It is usually asserted, that there is no express prohibition of self-murder throughout the Bible, except it be contained under the sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill;" or, as it is otherwise more clearly expressed, "Thou shalt do no murder." Killing, or the act of depriving another person of life, is not always a transgression of this commandment; since even the Law of Moses itself prescribes to the judge cases in which an offender

offender is to be put to death. But every commission of "murder," which is the taking away of life without proper authority, is a breach of the precept. According to this interpretation of the commandment, ("Thou shalt do no murder,") there is no need of making any limitations of the general prohibition; which avoids some cavils that have been raised on the subject of putting to death by lawful authority. It also renders this commandment more similar to the other prohibitory precepts which follow, and which require no exceptions. It is "always" a breach of duty to commit murder or adultery, to steal, to covet one's neighbour's possessions.

Now a general prohibition of committing murder must extend equally to a man's killing "himself," as his "neighbour." For since man's blood is not to be shed causelessly, or without authority, he, whose life is thus unjustly terminated, is equally murdered, whether it be by the hand of another or by his own. But if it be urged, "that the commandments of the second table (of which that in question is one) regard our conduct towards our neighbour alone, and not towards ourselves, and that therefore the prohibition of self-murder cannot be included under this precept;" it may be answered, that if to murder ourselves be doing a material injury, in many cases, to our neighbour also, it must be implied in the general prohibition, "Thou shalt not kill or commit murder," (whereto the words "thy neighbour" are no more added than "thyself,") because by such a self-assassination [c] the greatest injury may be done to our neighbour. It must be recollected, that in murdering another person, not only the greatest injury is done to the person murdered, but that his family, friends, and connexions of all kinds, are also materially affected and injured, by depriving them of all their interests in his life; and that, therefore, the

[c] "Nam & prohibitos nos esse intelligendum est, ubi Lex ait, "Non occides," præsertim quia non addit, "proximum tuum;" sicut falsum testimonium cum vetaret. Quanto igitur magis intelligendum est, non licere homini seipsum occidere, cum in eo quod scriptum est, "Non occides," nihilo deinde addito, nullus nec ipse utique, cui præcipitur, intelligitur exceptus. "Non occides"—non alterum, ergo nec te; neque enim qui se occidit alium quàm hominem occidit."—St. AUGUSTIN de Civ. Dei, Lib. I. c. xix.

See the matter well and fully explained in Bishop Fleetwood's first sermon on Ahitophel's self-murder—how the commandments, by which our actions are to be guided towards our neighbour, imply, in many cases, our duty towards ourselves also; and particularly in the case of self-murder:—from whence he deduces its actual prohibition under the sixth commandment.

prohibition is made for "their" peace and quiet, as well as for the sake of the individual, whose life may be endangered. So likewise when a man murders himself, the injury is not confined to himself alone, but extends to many others. From whence it follows, that allowing the sixth commandment to regard the safety and happiness of our neighbour only, yet self-murder must be prohibited under it, in order to provide effectually for that security.

Again; every one is ready to allow, that it would be an infraction of the commandment to kill our neighbour, when tired of his life, even though he should ever so earnestly request it at our hands. But it is hard to say, that if a man's power over his own life be not restrained by this precept, "Thou shalt not kill," why he might not transfer that power to another person, so as to make him equally innocent in the performance of the action at his neighbour's request, as if that neighbour had performed it on himself: it is not, therefore, sufficient that the killing be "voluntary," in order to render it void of offence against this precept. Again; the general line of duty enjoined by the commandments, which concern our conduct towards our neighbour, is comprehended in "doing to him, as we would be done by, and in loving him as ourselves." Now if we have no greater respect or regard for ourselves than to wish to kill ourselves, it might be difficult to prove, why we might not do the same by our neighbour also, being not obliged to love him "better" than ourselves: but to kill our neighbour would be a direct transgression of the commandment in its primary injunction, and consequently to kill ourselves is also virtually, if not directly, forbidden by the same commandment. The truth is, these rules of duty to our neighbour were appointed as the greatest possible security to him for our promoting his happiness, even as we would our own; and particularly with respect to not committing murder on our neighbour. For it was presumed, that as "no man hateth his own flesh, but loveth and cherisheth it;" and that, "skin for skin, yea any thing will a man give in exchange for his life;" an injunction "to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to do unto him as we would be done by," would be more than sufficient, when observed, to preserve his life from invasion and violence. It seems, therefore, no great stretch of interpretation, when it is said in general terms, "Thou shalt not kill," to add, "either thy neighbour or thyself;" since there seems to be an equal authority in private individuals to take away life in the one case,

as in the other ; that is, no authority at all in either : for if I must not murder another man, because he is made in the image of God, neither must I murder myself, who am made in the same image.

But whatever may be conceived to have been the strict sense of this commandment under the Jewish economy, yet there is certainly a liberty of extending its meaning under the Christian dispensation ; “ because” our blessed Lord himself has adjoined his own extended interpretations to many of the moral precepts of the Jewish law, and to this very commandment in particular. For not only actual killing, but even being [D] angry with our brother without a cause, is declared by our Saviour to be an enlargement of this precept, and of the offences that may be committed against it. Now though it should be urged, that He does not hereby signify that showing of anger was actually contained under the old precept, but only that He enlarges its original meaning, in order to render it more perfect ; it may be replied, that by these means, however, He leaves us an example to do the same towards [E] perfecting our rules of moral obligation ; inasmuch that it may be fairly concluded, that any injury or mischief, which murder of any sort may procure to our neighbour, is an infraction of this precept ; and since it has been abundantly proved, that self-murder may be highly injurious to our neighbour, as well as to ourselves, it seems undeniably to follow, that self-murder is virtually included under the general prohibition, “ Thou shalt not kill.”

But it is needless to lay too much stress on this interpretation, if it should appear to some persons in any sense forced or improper ; since the whole scope and tenour of the Christian dispensation exhibits one uniform proof or argument against the practice of suicide, though it no where (unless under the sixth commandment) expressly condemns it in so many words. For in the first place, if the principal arguments, which were advanced by the Heathen philosophers and others, to justify the commission of suicide on certain occasions, were much founded on their doubts and uncertainties with respect to a future existence, and its connexion with the present, and if these disquietudes concerning a

[D] See St. Matt. chap. v.

[E] “ I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil ;” that is, to render it complete and perfect.

future reward for present sufferings, were the best reasons which could be brought in favour of suicide in certain hopeless and desperate situations, what an effectual refutation do they receive by the mere promulgation of the Gospel itself, which exhibits so clear a manifestation of Immortality [F]! Yet had Divine revelation proceeded no further than a bare declaration of the certainty of a future life, the favourers of suicide might still have urged, that it might be reasonable and justifiable, on many occasions, to release the soul from its prison in the body, when that body contributed only to its disquietude and torment. But this argument also is clearly removed, when it is considered, that the same revelation further acquaints us with the nature of that life and immortality, which it has brought to light; viz. that it is to be a life of retribution, of reward and punishment for the actions of our present existence; whence it follows, of course, that this life must be a state of probation and trial. Now a state of trial includes in its very idea a state of difficulty, of suffering, of submission; (or, wherein are we to be tried?) consequently, that a patient endurance of pain and sorrow, not an abrupt departure from it, will alone show obedience, and entitle to reward.

Again; if it were a matter of question among many wise Heathens, how far the Gods interested themselves in the actions of men? how far they employed a superintending care over the concerns of human life? a doubt also would naturally arise in their minds, how far they were bound to suffer here, before they might release themselves by the stroke of suicide? But is not such a doubt effectually cleared up by the Gospel-assurance, that the eye of Providence pervades and watches over every part of the creation (much more over man) with a parental care and protection?—that hence all our sufferings (whatever they be) will be noted in God's book, as well as our patient or refractory behaviour under them?—that he who seeks to overcome, not he who flies from trouble, shall inherit all things?—that he who endures to the end, not he who rushes out of life by suicide, shall be saved? Comfort, then, and alleviation of trouble, is to be sought in the protection of Providence, in the support and promises of an Almighty Being.

[F] "Hath brought life and immortality (that is, immortal life) to light through the Gospel."—

2 Tim. i. 10.

From this review of things it appears, that whatever the Gospel prescribes to us concerning our duty to our neighbour; whatever it has assured us of life and immortality; whatever it has taught us to believe of our present existence, as a state of probation only; whatever it holds forth to our view of the peculiar attention and care of Providence over us; whatever submission and resignation to the Divine will it recommends; whatever reliance on God's promises it enjoins; whatever control over our irregular appetites and passions (those firebrands of self-murder) it directs; whatever faith it commands; whatever patience it requires;—all these revelations, admonitions, and precepts, are so many clear premises, from whence it follows, even to demonstration, how much the Deity, in the discovery of his will to mankind, has discountenanced and forbidden the bloody maxims and practice of self-murder. Nor is there any room to doubt this, because it has not been especially condemned by name in the Gospel; since numberless are the sins not specifically named in holy writ, or in so many words forbidden, but which are clearly prohibited by implication and rational deduction; and of which, as being sins on Christian principles, none but such as are incredulous of the whole system can entertain a moment's doubt. One instance may suffice. The principle of excessive gambling has no advocate in theory, though it meets with so many upholders in practice. It is an acknowledged vice, and allowed by every one to be of the most pernicious and destructive tendency to individuals and society: and yet where can that precept be found in the sacred page, which enjoins in so many words, “Thou shalt not game [G]?” It would have been unnecessary to have mentioned so obvious a truth, as that there are many acknowledged sins not mentioned by name in scripture, were we not called to it, in order to counteract the baneful effects of a poison, which lurks under an extraordinary note, with which the posthumous [H] Essay ascribed to the late

[G] St. Paul (Ephes. iv. 14.) uses the word *κλέψαι* (a word plainly derived from the gaming-table of the Greeks) in a metaphorical sense—*ἐν τῇ κλέψῃ τῶν ἀνθρώπων*, which we translate “by the sleight of men;” an apt allusion to the deceit and cunning of gamesters. It is plain also, how gaming was held in St. Paul's time, by the company with which he has joined *κλέψαι*, viz. *ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδίαν τῆς πλάνης*—“cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

It is curious to remark, that in Cruden's Concordance, the place which would naturally be filled by the word “gaming,” were there such a word to be found in holy writ, is occupied by “gangrene;” which so well expresses the baneful effects of gaming.

[H] The Essay itself will be considered in a future part of this work.

Mr.

Mr. Hume is concluded; and which, extraordinary as it may seem, is the single notice he is pleased to take, how this subject is affected by the doctrines of Christianity.

After having concluded his essay, Mr. Hume thrusts what follows into a note, as if what is therein treated of did not deserve a better place. “ It would be easy (says he) to prove, that suicide is as lawful under the Christian dispensation, as it was to the Heathens. There is not a single text of scripture which prohibits it. That great and infallible rule of faith and practice, which must control all philosophy and human reasoning, has left us in this particular to our natural liberty. Resignation to Providence is indeed recommended in scripture, but that implies only submission to ills that are unavoidable, not to such as may be remedied by prudence and courage. “ Thou shalt not kill,” is evidently meant to exclude only the killing of others, over whose life we have no authority. That this precept, like most of the scripture-precepts, must be modified by reason and common sense, is plain from the practice of magistrates, who punish [1] criminals capitally, notwithstanding the letter of the law. But were this commandment ever so express against suicide, it would now have no authority, for all the Law of Moses is [κ] abolished, except so far as it is established by the Law of Nature. And we have already endeavoured to prove, that suicide is not prohibited by that law. “ In all cases Christians and Heathens are precisely upon the same footing. Cato and Brutus, Arria and Portia [L] acted heroically; those who now imitate their example, ought to receive the same praises from posterity. The power of committing suicide is regarded by Pliny, as an advantage which men possess even above the Deity himself. “ Deus (says he, Nat. Hist. Lib. II. 7.) non sibi potest mortem consciscere si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitæ pœnis.”

[1] See concerning the power of the magistrate to punish capitally in Part II. c. iii.

[κ] Or rather improved (he should have said) by the law of Christianity. It happens also unfortunately for Hume, that this commandment, being of moral, not typical or ceremonial obligation, is not only not abolished, but even extended and enlarged by our Saviour himself. See Matt. v.

[L] These examples will be mentioned in other places: as will also the quotation from Pliny. Suffice it to observe here, that as the Deity is liable to no imperfection or trouble, He cannot want means of escaping it.

This note has been quoted at large, in order to avoid all imputation of misrepresentation; it is now time to attend to its extraordinary assertions. It may be allowed, in some sense, that suicide is as lawful at present, as it was in the days of Heathenism, because, in fact, it was never really lawful at all, but only less censurable in the times of ignorance and error, than in the brighter ones of revelation. Let us not, however, neglect to thank our author for the noble eulogy he has been pleased to bestow on Christianity, when he allows it must control all philosophy and human reasoning. However, it seems as if he thought that his own philosophy and favourite positions were subject to no such control, since his method of reasoning and conclusions on many points cannot be true, unless this great and infallible rule of faith and practice be false. There is a wonderful propensity in man to except "his own case" from the authority of those general rules, which he sees the propriety, and even necessity, of establishing for the conduct of others. The definition he next proposes of scriptural resignation is curious; being one of those happy ambiguities with which this writer so much abounds. If he means only, (a sense that his words may well bear) that we are not commanded in scripture to do nothing for ourselves, to sit with our hands folded, and "resign" ourselves up to the care of Providence, under those evils of life, from which, by an exertion of activity, of prudence and courage, we might free ourselves; but only to submit our cause to God, and to rely on his Providence under such evils as, after all our precautions and exertions, are still unavoidable—if this be his meaning, we heartily join issue with him. But if by his "prudence" he means, a determination to get rid of evils at any rate, and by his "courage," the sort of resolution requisite to perpetrate suicide, here we must widely separate from following his opinion. It is not clear what ills can, in this case, be called "unavoidable," since the power will always exist of getting rid of them at pleasure in this way; or, consequently, when an opportunity can ever occur of exercising that resignation to Providence, which he allows to be recommended in scripture. These latter insinuations alone make to his purpose, otherwise he allows at once, that we ought to be resigned under evils, which we cannot by all our exertion avoid.

As to Christians and Heathens being precisely on the same footing with respect to the innocence or criminality of suicide, the assertion evidently rests on this false ground, that because it is not expressly forbidden by name in the Gospel, it

is therefore (he concludes) not prohibited at all: whereas it appears from what has been said above in this chapter, that the whole scope and design of the Gospel-covenant is professedly at variance with every idea [M] which the impatience of suicide suggests. Besides, if a superior degree of light thrown on the understanding demands a more precise and accurate judgment of things; if human ignorance and error cannot be weighed in the same scale with Divine wisdom and truth, then it must be unjust to determine on an Heathen's conduct by a Christian's line of duty. The former might well have his doubts and difficulties with respect to his behaviour in this life and his existence in the next; the latter can have none: and as the obligation to the performance of every moral and religious duty is abundantly heightened by the illumination of the Gospel, so the violation of those duties must be infinitely more criminal now than heretofore. If then suicide were even allowed to be "lawful" in an Heathen, and were further allowed not to be particularly and expressly forbidden by the general tenour of the Gospel, it does not necessarily follow, that it would be lawful in a Christian also; because the moral and religious duties of a Christian, being founded on different obligations, must have different tendencies, and must lead to different modes of reasoning and different conclusions from an Heathen on the same subject. But if suicide were unlawful even in an Heathen, then its guilt must be much heightened in a Christian, even supposing he found no immediate precept concerning it in the Gospel; because every thing that was sinful in the days of imperfection and involuntary error, must be surcharged with guilt in those of bright illumination. Whether, therefore, suicide were or were not lawful in the days of Heathenism, and allowing no immediate prohibition in the Gospel, yet a Christian stands not on the same ground with an

[M] A reason has been assigned by some writers, why self-murder was not prohibited by name in the old law; because, whatever sins God, as a temporal lawgiver, especially prohibits by Himself, or his servant Moses, He prohibits with a certain penalty annexed of suffering in property or person in this world; and the Jewish economy looked no further. But it was impossible to annex any penalty to be suffered in this world by the perpetrator of suicide, and therefore his crime is not specially mentioned under the old law, though, perhaps, virtually included under the sixth commandment. (See Fleetwood's first sermon on Ahitophel's self-murder.) It may be said, but why then is it not mentioned in the Gospel, where the above reason could have no weight? Now the whole design of the Gospel is so evidently contradictory to the principles of suicide, that it is impossible to mistake it for a virtue, or even for an indifferent action under that dispensation; wherefore it might seem the more unnecessary to brand it particularly by name for a sinful one.

Heathen;

Heathen; since his reason being assisted, his judgment improved, his passions regulated, his affections raised, his mind elevated, his duties cleared up and enlarged, his confidence in a superintending Providence strengthened, and his views of futurity expanded, it follows by just consequence, that his determinations and decisions on many points of his conduct must widely differ from those of an Heathen moralist. Instead, therefore, of standing exactly in the same predicament, their cases are not at all to be deemed similar.

But surely one must imagine, that it could hardly be seriously concluded by Hume, that, because there was no such prohibition to be found in the Gospel, as Thou shalt not kill "thyself," self-murder was, therefore, "not" intended to be forbidden. There are as few actual precepts for the performance of what is necessary for self-preservation, as there are against self-destruction: yet would an Hume (supposing him to have had so much faith in scripture, as to have determined to follow its direct precepts alone) have omitted to take his daily sustenance, till he had found an express written command, "Thou shalt eat" "and drink to preserve life"? Or would he have chosen to continue in some perilous situation, surrounded by fire or water, because he had no where found it written in scripture, "Thou shalt not stay to be burned or drowned, but haste to make thy escape"? Yet he can triflingly maintain, (because it makes to his purpose) that it is a tacit allowance at least of suicide, because it is nowhere said in the New Testament in so many words, "Thou shalt not drink poison, blow out thy brains, or fall on thine own sword; in short, thou shalt not kill thyself." Whoever is conversant with the sacred writings, well knows that the express Gospel-precepts are generally such as teach us resignation, humility, patience, submission, which are all virtues not very favourable (as was before observed) to the desperate plunge of suicide; that the regulation of the passions are their great aim, (a prevention this of the chief incitements to commit suicide) and that therefore they particularly warn us against falling into such practices as conspire with our irregular appetites and inclinations, deeming it unnecessary to mention such as our nature of itself is ready to abhor. To the illiterate and vulgar it scarce seemed necessary to observe, "Thou shalt not murder thyself;" genuine nature says the same to them every moment of their lives. But the philosopher, it seems, who attempts to argue away all natural

impulses, as only fit to govern the crowd, thinks there is need of such a precept. One is almost inclined to repeat here after the Grecian dramatist,

Εν τῷ φρονεῖν γὰρ μὴδὲν, ἡδίστος βίος. —SOPH.

———“Where ignorance is bliss,

“’Tis folly to be wise.” —GRAY.

C H A P. II.

Donne maintains suicide to be sometimes permitted in scripture by fair implication.—His reasons, why he conceives the sixth commandment not to exclude “all” self-homicide, any more than “all” killing, answered.—Reasons, why a man cannot impartially determine in favour either of his own life or death.—It is agreed with Donne, that there is no express prohibition of suicide in all the old law, except it be contained under “Thou shalt not kill.”—Donne’s meaning in asserting suicide to be sometimes lawful under the Gospel.—Texts, which seem to him to make to his purpose: answers thereto.—Donne’s consideration of our Saviour’s “voluntary” sacrifice of himself, as being a species of suicide to be imitated by us on proper occasions.—In what sense we are to imitate our Saviour’s voluntary death.—Passages of scripture quoted, as being of more force to forbid, than those which Donne has produced to allow, suicide.—The apostles left no actual precept on a matter so evidently repugnant to the whole system of Christianity.—Scripture examples of suicide.—Samson.—Saul.—Ahitophel.—Judas Iscariot.—Opinion of Augustin, (in his mention of Judas,) “that a wicked man sins less in committing suicide than an innocent one,” refuted.—Eleazar.—Razis.—Scripture silence, as to the condemnation or acquittal of any historical fact related, is true silence, and not to be brought in proof either way.—The characters of those who committed suicide in scripture, not good enough to give countenance to the action: not committed by the best characters under their heaviest afflictions: not by the apostles or first saints under their severest trials.—Some cases in which suicide was thought meritorious

in some early ages of the church; such as to prevent a denial of the faith, a commission of any idolatrous act; to preserve virginity, to be esteemed martyrs—The fallacy of these grounds of suicide.—Why Pliny wrote so mildly of the Christians to Trajan.—Not likely to be persecuted in these days in defence of our faith; therefore no pretence for committing suicide on such accounts.—A Christian is to promote the glory of God in his “life.”—When suicide winds up a life of iniquity, it has nothing to plead in its defence either on Heathen or Christian grounds.—Why we may “hazard” our lives on laudable motives consistently with Christian morality, though we may not put an end to them with our own hands.—Brief recapitulation of the preceding Parts; and reasons for entering further on an historical and critical review of the subject.

THERE was a writer of eminent learning and abilities, Dr. John Donne [N], who died Dean of St. Paul's in the year 1631, who, though a serious well-wisher to the cause of Christianity, goes beyond Hume, in not only denying that suicide is prohibited in the Old and New Testament, but in maintaining, that it is even actually allowed, on some occasions, by fair implication. The third part of Donne's work contains the same inquiry as employs our present reflections, viz. “How the Law of God (meaning the revealed Law) “affects the subject of suicide?” He mentions several texts conceived by different writers to be direct prohibitions of the practice [o] of suicide; but as they must be allowed to be far-fetched interpretations, as applied immediately to it, we readily agree with him in discarding them; and shall only bestow a few reflections on his interpretation of the precept, “Thou shalt not kill;” which, for the reasons mentioned in the last chapter, may be conceived to include a prohibition of self-murder.

Now Donne's objection to including self-homicide under the commandment is simply this. “The words (he says) are general—Thou shalt not kill:—

[N] A fuller account of this writer, as well as a criticism on the two former parts of his work called “*Biathanatos*,” will be given hereafter.—See Part VI. c. i.

[o] The most material are these.—“I kill (says the Almighty) and I make alive, neither is there any that can deliver from my hand.” (Deut. xxxiii. 39.) “The Lord killeth and maketh alive.” (1 Sam. ii. 6.) These and such like expressions should certainly convince us, that the issues of life and death are in the hands of the Almighty, not in our own; and consequently that self-murder is unjustifiable; but their immediate design seems simply to declare the omnipotence of God.

“ and yet we kill by public authority, or in a just war, or in defence of one’s own life, or of another’s. All these exceptions we make without supposing we offend against the commandment; why then may not self-homicide, on certain occasions, be a lawful exception to the general precept?” Now if it be allowed, (and this he does not seem to wish to deny) that the general prohibition of self, as well as of other, murder is included under this commandment, the case must be very perspicuous and self-evident, which will justify an exemption from a moral precept which is so plain and clear. The cases of acknowledged exception which he mentions, are all cases either mediately or immediately appertaining to self-defence; or in which violence must be opposed to violence, and the transgression must lie at the door of the aggressor. A thief or highwayman invades our property and endangers our lives; and therefore it is a mere matter of justice, that where killing of one party or the other is inevitable, the innocent sufferer should be allowed to repel death from himself, and to inflict it (if absolutely necessary for his own immediate preservation) on his opponent. But if able, with personal safety to himself, to deliver up the offender to public justice, the magistrate is then appointed, in defence of the whole community, (which is but an enlarged degree of self-defence) to inflict the legal sentence against the life of a dangerous citizen. When a public enemy invades our rights, he robs us of our property and endangers our lives; and the consequent shedding of blood is nothing more than self-defence as a nation. But the reason of any exception to the commandment in favour of self-assassination is not so evident, because there being no occasion for shedding of blood at all, the point of killing is not of necessity, (as in the other exceptions, which alone can justify overlooking the commandment) but of mere choice. Possible cases may be supposed, in which there shall be an appearance or semblance of virtue in offering violence to ourselves for the good of others; but these only tend to prove the various degrees of guilt there may be in offending against this commandment, and that errors in judgment may be committed with an innocent heart. This, therefore, does not rise to an exculpation of the action itself, since the shedding man’s blood can never be consistent with the Divine laws, except on the score of absolute necessity; of which necessity the party himself, advising only with himself, can scarce ever be an impartial judge. The natural love of life will incline him to determine in favour of his own life at a time, perhaps, when the good order of society might require its sacrifice; or,

if

if he should have overcome this natural instinct, (as we see too often done) his desire of death may prompt him to esteem his life more insignificant and useless than it really is, and to determine that certain benefits would arise to others by his death, which might be all imaginary. In either case self-interest sways; and whether it be in favour of life or death, its empire is too powerful, and its language too persuasive, to make us cool and impartial judges.

But let us follow Donne through his subsequent arrangements; agreeing, however, with him, "that in all the judicial, in all the ceremonial law delivered by Moses, there is no immediate prohibition of self-homicide, unless it be contained under—"Thou shalt not kill." He next examines into the New Testament, and after producing a few passages, which he says are usually mentioned by his opponents, as forbidding suicide, but which, it may with safety be agreed with him, are wrested much from their genuine import, when applied in that manner [P], (and which, therefore, need no consideration in this place) he goes on to propose such other passages as appear to him to make in favour of his purpose, which purpose it would be unfair to misrepresent or stretch beyond [Q] its author's real meaning; who only maintains suicide to be lawful in certain cases, "in which it works somewhat to the service of God, and ad-

[P] Some of the texts are—"The keeper of the prison drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing the prisoners had been gone. But Paul cried, Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." (Acts xvi. 17.) All that can be said here is, that St. Paul used the most effectual argument with this man to restrain him from suicide; viz. that there could be no reason for it, as his prisoners were all safe. But the apostle says no more on the subject, as it would not have been a convenient season to have expatiated upon it. Again; "No man may do evil, that good may come." (Rom. iii. 8.) This, indeed, is, in a general way, applicable to suicide, as well as all other evil, and condemns in particular that species of it, for which Donne is contending; viz. "such as will advance the glory of God." For if suicide be an evil, it ought not to be committed "even" to advance the glory of God.—"We are the temples of God," (see 2 Cor. vi. 16. and 1 Cor. iii. 16.) "We are members of his body, (Christ's,) of his flesh and of his bones." (Ephes. v. 30.) These are general reasons for great purity and holiness, and as such act to the regulation of those sensual appetites and pursuits, which so often terminate in suicide. But these passages do not aim at the prohibition of suicide in particular. Every precept (as has been observed) enjoining faith, resignation, humility, &c. might be adduced with much greater force than the above; but none apply "totidem verbis;" only in their force and well grounded consequences.

[Q] See Donne's views in writing "Biathanatos," with all that appertains to it, more fully explained in the chapter set apart for its examination hereafter.—See Part VI. c. i.

"vancement of his glory." Wherever it "really" does this, we should be ready to accede with him to an opinion of its lawfulness; our only doubt being, whether this ever "can" happen under the Christian system of ethics? The texts he introduces are as follows:—"If I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) "The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." (John x. 11.) "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." (John xv. 13.) "I will lay down my life for thy sake" (says Peter). "He that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." (John xii. 25.) "Except he hate his own life, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 26.) "Some were racked, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." (Heb. xi. 35.) "Because he laid down his life for us, we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John iii. 16.) Donne likewise asserts the voluntary sacrifice of our Saviour himself to have been a species of suicide, which we ought to be ready to imitate on proper occasions. He considers these passages separately, and concludes them all to be favourable to, and even commanding suicide, when charity, or the good of our neighbour's soul, requires it. But they may all receive one general answer; that these and such like expressions only require of us a readiness to lay down our lives for the sake of the Gospel of Christ, and for the edification of our Christian brethren, whenever such a sacrifice is demanded of us, and we cannot preserve our lives from the violence of others, but at the expence of our innocence and faith. They only mean, that we should despise the present life in comparison of a better; that we should readily and resolutely maintain our innocence and faith in the hour of persecution, in the midst of perils and dangers, and at the hazard of our lives themselves, which we should willingly part with (if necessary) in the conflict, that so we may confirm others in their virtue, and meet ourselves with the rewards of our constancy. Yet in all this there is not a word, a hint of self-assassination, but a submission only to the mockings and scourgings, the imprisonment, the bonds, the tortures and cruel kinds of death, which others will be ready to impose on us. We are taught hereby to despise those threatenings of death with which our enemies would terrify us, and cheerfully to submit ourselves to its stroke, whenever it falls upon us. As for our blessed Saviour's example, (which we are bound to imitate in every thing practicable by mere humanity) He certainly laid down his life for our sakes, and that voluntarily,

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since no power on earth was sufficient to have taken it from him against his will; but yet He suffered not by his own hand, or of his own seeking; and, therefore, in that He suffered his life "to be taken from him," but did not deprive himself of it, He left us an example that we should follow his steps.

But as Donne has produced passages from the New Testament in favour (as he thinks) of a limited suicide on his principles, it is allowable to quote a few others of at least equal force in establishment of our own. For though the sin of self-murder is more completely deducible by implication from the general and acknowledged principles of the whole Gospel, than from any direct, verbal precept concerning it, yet there are many passages which cannot be understood in any tolerable sense without drawing down a severe censure on its practice. A few will suffice. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." (Heb. xii. 1.) But what sort of patience do we use, when we refuse to run that race by cutting short the thread of life?—"Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promises." (Heb. x. 36.) What is this but a caution against the impatience of self-murder? We are also commanded to "consider Him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." (Heb. xii. 3.) But why are we so commanded? "lest we should be weary, and that we faint not in our minds." But does the self-murderer pursue his course with resolution and steadfastness; or is he not rather soon faint and weary? He heeds not the most excellent advice of St. Paul, (Ephes. vi. 13.) "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Such an armour is complete against the machinations of self-murder. The case of suicide perhaps never came immediately under the cognisance of the apostles, nor might they be ever questioned by their converts on a point that seemed at first sight totally repugnant to the true spirit of Christianity, through all its amiable system of humility and forbearance; and therefore

therefore they might leave no positive injunction on the subject, though it is easy to see what must have been their judgment, had they found it necessary to have declared one.

Donne concludes his inquiry into the Law of God concerning suicide, by an examination of scripture-examples. These he introduces, "not indeed (he says) to be relied on, like the reasons to be brought from the passages of scripture he quotes, but as auxiliaries to his cause, of which his adversaries, at least, can make no use, or from whence they can derive no profit:" nor, perhaps, will his adversaries be ready to subjoin, can he himself. We will go through these examples, and occasionally notice what Donne has observed concerning them. The first example of suicide mentioned in scripture is that of Samson; (Judges xvi.) who, after he had yielded to the solicitations of the perfidious Delilah, relative to a discovery of the source of his extraordinary strength, was shorn of his might and prowess by the cutting off his hair; beside which his eyes were put out, and he was made to suffer many and great indignities by the lords of the Philistines. These ascribed their victory over so formidable an enemy to the interposition of their god Dagon; to whom, therefore, they offered a great sacrifice, with much rejoicing and feasting. "Our god (said they) hath delivered into our hands our great enemy, and the destroyer of our country, who slew so many of us." Whereupon, as soon as the hearts of the lords of the Philistines waxed merry with wine, they added insult to affliction, and sent for Samson from his prison-house "to make them sport." Roused with indignation at this fresh piece of ignominy, and being suffered to rest awhile on the two principal pillars that supported the building, in which all the lords of the Philistines, and an infinite number of others, were assembled, while Samson made sport, he prayed thus to the Lord, and said, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." And, taking hold of the pillars, he said, "Let me die with the Philistines: and he bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the lords, and all that were therein; so that the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." Not a word being added in holy writ either by way of censure or approbation of this action, readers have been led to determine variously upon it; some condemning the
author;

author, as not only guilty of suicide, but horrid murder also, and that [R] out of a principle of pure revenge; whilst others applaud the fact, as done out of a desire of gaining [s] glory to the true God, whose power had been set at nought in the person of Samson. The latter indeed seems a truer judgment of the nature of the action, as it is not to be imagined that God would have listened to Samson's prayer for the purpose of his own personal revenge alone, had not an ample demonstration at the same time been to be made, of the superiority of the Almighty's power, over that of the idol Dagon, in whose temple, as it is supposed, the Philistines were then assembled. Besides St. Paul (Heb. xi.) reckons Samson among those, who "out of weakness were made strong through faith." This suicide of Samson then was of that nature, which respects not self immediately, or primarily seeks to compass its own death. Had Samson only fought his own death, he would probably have found means of destroying himself in prison, before he was brought forth to be made a show and a spectacle. But a renewal of the glory of God in the destruction of the Philistines was his principal object; which glory had been apparently violated by their general usage of his servant Samson, and the particular indignity they had made him suffer in the loss of his eyes. His own death was an accidental circumstance connected with his point in view, but not the first and direct aim of the

[R] "This was suicide (speaking of Samson's death) and murder united. This no doubt proceeded from the instigation of resistance and revenge, but upon no principle whatsoever can it be justified."——HERRIES'S Sermon on Suicide.

[s] "Nonnulli tamen Hebræorum de lege se non interficiendi unam causam excipiunt tanquam *ἐκλογὴν ἐξαγωγῆς*, si quis videat se deinceps victurum in probrum ipsius Dei. Nam quia non nobis sed Deo in vitam nostram jus esse statuunt, existimant præsumtam Dei voluntatem solam esse, quæ mortis anticipandæ consilium absolvat. Atque huc referunt Samsonis exemplum, qui in suo corpore veram religionem videbat esse derisui; & Saulis, qui gladio incubuit, ne a Dei suisque hostibus illuderetur."——GROTIUS de Jure Belli & Pacis, Lib. II. c. xix. sect. 5. De Jure Sepulture.

"Samson is not to be thought properly a self-murderer; for he was moved by an heroic spirit from God himself, to make himself a sacrifice (as I may call it) for the good of his country."——BISHOP PATRICK'S Com. ad locum.

"Samson is to be excused, because St. Paul reckons him among the saints; and therefore Augustin says (Lib. I. c. xvi. and xxi. de Civ. Dei) he did it by peculiar inspiration of God. But as no man can tell whether he did or not, I like what Peter Martyr says better: "that Samson's primary wish and intention was to kill the enemies of God; and to accomplish this, he willingly sacrificed his own life also; as a soldier embraces all hazard in his country's service."——TAYLOR'S Ductor Dubitantium, B. III. c. ii.

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action. It was necessary indeed for him to put his own life into the utmost hazard, with scarce a possibility of escape; but he cheerfully submitted to fall with his enemies rather than not accomplish his great design. It may therefore readily be allowed with Donne (without entering however into all his subtil and nice distinctions), that Samson may be esteemed a martyr to the cause of his religion and his God; and that, if he is to be reckoned among the number of suicides, his death, according to the spirit of the old law, was worthy of praise in the mode of its accomplishment.

Another example to be adduced is that of Saul, who, rather than fall alive into the hands of his victorious enemies, first entreated his armour-bearer to dispatch him, who refusing, and slaying himself at his royal master's feet, Saul was forced to fall upon his sword; and (as it seems from comparing the two accounts) not fully accomplishing his own death, he was afterwards at his own express desire stood upon and slain by a young [T] Amalekite. Neither praise nor censure being bestowed here by the sacred [U] penman, we are left to form our own judgment of the matter. The action had certainly nothing glorious in it. When Saul found the Philistines prevailing against his army, he took

[T] "And the battle went fore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was fore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not, for he was fore afraid; therefore Saul took a sword and fell upon it. And when his armour-bearer saw, that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword and died with him."——1 Sam. chap. xxxi.

"And the young man said; As I happened by chance upon Mount Gilboa, behold Saul leaned upon his spear; and lo! the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me and called unto me, and said, Who art thou? And I answered, I am an Amalekite. He said unto me again, Stand I pray thee upon me and slay me, for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood upon him and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live, after that he was fallen."——2 Sam. chap. i.

[U] Though the Jews allowed it to be a sufficient cause of self-murder, when a man's future life (by his falling into an enemy's hands) might seem to reflect disgrace on the true religion, and on this account they commended the action both of Samson and Saul; yet they had no justification or authority for such an opinion: since they could not look into futurity so far as to judge, what would finally be for God's honour. For instance, the temporary disgrace of Samson redounded in the end to the honour of his religion; since the temple of Dagon was destroyed, and Samson slew more of his enemies by his death than he had done in his life.

to an ignominious flight with his army. He was soon however stopt by an arrow, which wounded him sore. He then requested his armour-bearer to kill him outright, (wanting either strength or resolution to do it himself) that he might not fall alive into the hands of his enemies. How much more glorious would it have been to have perished in the midst of the battle, fighting bravely in defence of his kingdom, than to have sought his first refuge in flight and his last in suicide! He then had fallen like an hero, now like a deserter! From Saul's case then nothing can be urged in favour of suicide, even on natural or rational principles, much less that can make it defensible under Divine revelation.

The self-murder of Ahitophel comes next under consideration; in which Donne allows there [x] can be "no room for excuse." In Ahitophel we acknowledge the wisest counsellor of the age, first to David his lawful prince, and afterwards to Absalom during his rebellion; for he joined the son against his father. "The counsel of Ahitophel (says the sacred text, 2 Sam. xvi. 23.) "which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the "oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahitophel, both with David and "Absalom." But God having determined to defeat his good counsel for the furtherance of Absalom's cause, this shrewd politician saw himself for the first time neglected, and his wholesome advice set at nought; on which, full of secret indignation, disappointment and despair; (for he plainly foresaw the overthrow of Absalom and return of David from the counsels then pursuing, and of consequence his own utter disgrace and ruin for his perfidy) "he arose "and gat him to his house and to his city, and put his household in order, "and hanged himself; and he died and was buried in the sepulchre of his "fathers." (2 Sam. xvii. 23.) Had he hanged himself on the spot, it might

[x] In allowing thus much however Donne seems to depart from a principle, he had just before laid down. "As the phrase of scripture (says he) never diminishes the character of those, who killed "themselves, by any aspersions or imputation for that fact, if they were otherwise virtuous; nor aggravates thereby their former wickedness, if they were wicked; I am therefore for my part content to submit myself to that rule, which is delivered from Irenæus, That those things, which the "scripture doth not reprehend, but simply lays down, it becomes not us to accuse." According to this rule Donne should not have condemned Ahitophel's self-murder, because it is not especially condemned in scripture. But the truer principle of judging seems to be, that where a mere historical fact is related in the scriptures without comment, the good or evil that is in it, must be determined by the general principles and tenour of scripture-morality.

have been deemed the effect of a sudden agitation and vexation on his disappointment and chagrin; but this shrewd and (as he is called by Delaney in his *Life of David*) this Machiavelian counsellor went more coolly and deliberately to work; for he settled all his affairs, he put his house in order, and then filled up the measure of his complicated guilt, of his treachery and rebellion against David, of his infamous advice to Absalom, by throwing himself suddenly into the arms of Divine justice, without a possibility of repentance and reparation, by the act of self-murder. A little true wisdom at first, in avoiding evil practices against his king, and in not confederating with his rebellious son, would have kept him in the right way; but it required even more adroitness and cunning than Ahitophel was master of, to recover himself afterwards.

Another traitor to his Lord and Master must not be omitted here—the self-murderer Judas Iscariot, of whom indeed Ahitophel seems to have been a type. Of him Donne asserts, “that his self-murder is not imputed to him in addition to his sin, either in the New Testament or in those two Psalms (Psalm lxxix. and cix.) which are supposed to denounce judgment on this traitor’s conduct.” Certainly not; but does Donne therefore think to advance any thing in favour of suicide from the action of such a traitor, whose other enormities, of whatever cast they might be, are so much swallowed up by his act of treachery, as to need no special enumeration, in order to load his memory with [y] additional infamy?

But the suicide of Judas has met with its defenders, who have made it even commendable, and deserving of being esteemed a martyrdom, as being the effect of deep remorse and contrition. Petilian said, “that Judas and all, who kill themselves through remorse of sin, ought to be accounted martyrs; because they punish in themselves, what they grieve to have committed.” To

[y] It must be remarked, that the same word *ἀννέξασθαι* is used to express both Ahitophel’s and Judas’s death; and as this word signifies a suffocation, arising from extraordinary swellings and fulness of the body, as well as from hanging, some have ascribed both their deaths to a bursting of their bodies through excess of anguish and remorse for their deeds rather than to any hanging of themselves; in which case they were no suicides. See Patrick on Ahitophel’s case, and Theophylact and Grotius on Judas’s. See also Donne, who produces several ancient writers of the same opinion. Commentators are much divided. However as they have usually been styled suicides by all writers on this subject, they have been so considered here.

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whom Augustin replies; "Thou hast said, that the traitor perished by the rope, and has left a rope behind him for such as himself. But we have [z] nothing to do with him. We do not venerate those as martyrs, who hang themselves."—The case and the crime of Judas, which led him to his own murder, was of so extraordinary and singular a nature, as can scarce be drawn into any precedent of any kind; but thus far may be safely affirmed, that self-murder can never be a truly Christian method of showing our contrition and repentance for sin. One observation however it may be proper to make, on what is advanced by St. Augustin in his mention of Judas in another place; where he seems to assert, "that a wicked man errs less in being guilty of suicide than an innocent one." "If (says he) it be not lawful [A] for any private person, who is not authorised by law, to kill another even though guilty, it must be truly murder to kill himself; and the self-murderer becomes so much the more guilty, by how much the more innocent he was of the cause, for which he thought it necessary to dispatch himself. For if we deservedly detest the action of Judas, and since truth determines, that when he hung himself, he increased rather than expiated the crime of his infamous treachery; since repenting to his own destruction by despairing of the mercy of God, he left no room for wholesome and salutary repentance, how much more ought any one to refrain from his own slaughter, who has not within him what deserves to be punished with such severity? For Judas, when he slew himself, slew only a wicked man; and yet he finished his life, not only guilty of Christ's, but also of his own death, adding the wickedness of his own death to that other wickedness for which he put himself to death." Augustin's argument seems to stand thus. "If it be not lawful for a private person, who

[z] See Gratian, *Causa* 24, *Quæst.* 5. and Augustin. *contra Literas Petilianæ*, Lib. II. c. xlix. vol. viii. fol. Parisiis 1694.

[A] The passage is as follows in Augustin. *De Civ. Dei*. Lib. I. "Si non licet privatâ potestate alicui hominem occidere vel nocentem, cujus occidendi licentiam lex nulla concedit, profecto etiam qui seipsum occidit, homicida est; & tanto sit nocentior, quanto innocentior in eâ causâ fuit, quâ se occidendum putavit. Nam si Judæ factum merito detestamur, cumque veritas judicat, cum laqueo se suspendit, sceleratæ illius traditionis auxisse potius quàm expiâsse commissum, quoniam de Dei misericordiâ desperando exitiabiliter pœnitens, nullum sibi salubris pœnitentiæ locum reliquit; quanto magis a suâ nece abstinere debet, qui tali supplicio, quid in se puniat, non habet. Judas enim, cum se occidit, sceleratum hominem occidit, & tamen non solum Christi, verum etiam suæ mortis reus finivit hanc vitam; quia licet propter suum scelus alio tamen scelere suo occisus est."

is not authorised, to kill another man, even one who is guilty, it is not law to kill himself even when he is guilty; but if not lawful to kill another when guilty, it is less lawful to kill him, when innocent; and so by parity of reasoning, it is less lawful to kill himself being innocent." But this method of arguing does not hold good. When a private citizen kills another without authority (either from self-defence or otherwise) for so doing, the law never inquires into the previous innocence or guilt of the person killed, in order to pass sentence on the murderer, but only into the fact; the offence in the eye of the law being the same in either case. Circumstances indeed may afterwards be pleaded, to mitigate or enforce the strict execution of the sentence, but this has nothing to do with the sentence itself. The accused must either be wholly acquitted or wholly condemned of the fact: so that there is no rise of guilt in the eye of public justice, whether the person murdered were a guilty or an innocent person? he was murdered contrary to law, which was the only object of inquiry. If then I may not kill myself, because I may not kill another person, and the act alone of killing that other person constitutes my offence; so the act of killing myself is the offence against the public, without respect had to my previous guilt or innocence. Now this is as far as the argument, founded on my not being at liberty to kill myself, because I must not kill another, will hold good. The law knows no difference between the degrees of guilt in suicide, and only inquires into the "state of the mind" (whether sane or not) of the suicide, leaving the aggravation or extenuation of his guilt to be adjudged in foro conscientiae, between God and his own conscience. Now the degrees of guilt in suicide must depend on its producing causes, joined to the share of duties neglected by so premature a kind of death; and it can scarce be imagined, that where these causes or incitements to its commission were vicious, there the act itself can be less vicious, than where they were innocent, and the act only the effect of a wrong judgment: and as to duties neglected, the guilty suicide will always neglect "one more" than he, who was previously innocent, by thus depriving himself of the possibility of repentance and making reparation for his former offences. Suicide then in the former case has the "Cause" as well as "Effect" to answer for; in the latter the [B] effect alone without the cause; and therefore we must beg leave to differ from Augustin on this point, and to maintain, that suicide in consequence of previous guilt is more sinful than when preceded by a life of innocence.

[B] See Part I. c. iii. for a fuller discussion of the point of Cause and Effect.

Two examples of suicide are also brought by Donne from the Books of the Maccabees, which, though not allowed to make a part of the Protestant Canon of Scripture, may yet be mentioned here. The first is the bold [c] exploit of Eleazar the brother of Judas Maccabeus; who seeing an elephant of larger size than usual in the battle, and adorned with royal harness, imagined King Antiochus himself must be on his back. Wherefore he hesitated not "to put himself in jeopardy, to the end that he might deliver his people and get himself a perpetual name. He entered therefore into the heat of the battle, slaying on the right hand and on the left, till he approached the elephant; when contriving to creep under his belly, he thrust him underneath and slew him, whereupon the elephant fell down upon him, and there he died." If he accomplished his purpose, the fall of the elephant was sure to crush him to atoms; consequently he is considered as a voluntary suicide, "in whom self-destruction (says Donne) was laudable." This may be readily allowed, and for the same reason, which Donne (and the other school-men whom he quotes as praising it) gives, viz. "because it was a voluntary sacrifice for the good of his country; and that to expose ourselves to certain death (especially in war) when our first end be not to compass our own death, but some common good, is lawful and praise-worthy."

The manner, in which Razis is recorded to have accomplished his voluntary death, is full of horror, and indeed is altogether a marvellous [d] story. When the tower in which Razis was fighting against the army of Nicanor, was set on fire, he fell on his own sword; "choosing rather (says the text) to die manfully than to fall into the hands of the wicked, to be abused otherwise than befitted his noble birth: but missing his stroke through haste, the multitude also rushing within the doors, he ran boldly up to the wall, and cast himself down manfully among the thickest of them. But they quickly giving back and a space being made, he fell down into the midst of a void place. Nevertheless, while there was yet breath within him, being inflamed with anger, he rose up; and though his blood gushed out like fountains of water, and his wounds were grievous, yet he ran through the midst of the throng, and standing on a steep rock, when as his blood was now quite gone, he plucked

[c] See 1 Macc. vi.

[d] See Arnald's Dissertation on the two Books of the Maccabees.

"out his bowels, and taking them in both his hands, he cast them upon the throng; and calling upon the Lord of life and spirit to restore him them again, he thus died [E]." As his motive to such reiterated strokes of self-destruction was personal only, being a determination not to fall alive into the hands of those soldiers, who were sent on purpose to seize him, it has no particular claim on our approbation and applause, but rather fills us with horror and disgust. To die courageously and manfully on such desperate occasions consists (as was before observed in the case of Saul) in rushing upon the enemy and selling our own lives as dear as we can.

Such then are the scripture-examples of suicide; which, as they have received no immediate censure for the action in the sacred text, Donne would from thence infer, that suicide is not prohibited, but rather in some measure countenanced in the law of God. But the scriptures are on many occasions an history of facts alone, leaving their condemnation or acquittal to be judged of by the rules of plain morality, and by the general tenour of the revealed will of God. The silence of scripture therefore in such cases is of no more avail to acquit than to condemn the fact, and if Donne be not ready to allow the latter, we are in no shape obliged to assent [F] to the former. Indeed the characters of these scriptural suicides were not previously so good or amiable, (some notoriously otherwise) as that any countenance can be given to the cause by their example. When a man of eminent character does an extraordinary action, others are apt to give him an unbounded credit for the same, and to think

[E] "Solent in literis Gentilitium ista (speaking of Razis's death) laudari. In his autem Macabæorum libris, quamvis homo ipse fuerit laudatus, factum tamen ejus narratum est, non laudatum, & judicandum potius quam imitandum quasi ante oculos constitutum, non sane nostro judicio judicandum, quod nos quoque ut homines habere possemus, sed judicio doctrinæ sobriæ, quæ in ipsis quoque libris veteribus clara est. Longe quippe fuit iste Razis a verbis illis ubi legitur (Ecclus. ii. 4.) "Omne quod tibi applicitum fuerit, accipe," &c. Non ergo fuit iste vir eligendæ mortis sapiens, sed ferendæ humilitatis impatiens. Scriptum est, quod voluerit Nobiliter & Viriliter mori; sed nunquid adeo Sapienter? Nobiliter sane, ne libertatem sui generis captivus amitteret. Viriliter autem, quod tantas vires animi haberet, quibus idoneus esset, ut se perimeret. Magna hæc sunt, nec tamen bona. Non enim bonum est omne, quod magnum est: quoniam sunt magna etiam mala."—AUGUSTINUS ad Dulcitium, Ep. 204. Classi. 3. Folio.

[F] "Scripture-silence (says Fleetwood concerning Ahitophel's self-murder) is true silence, and says nothing either for or against any practice."

his example worthy of imitation, even without inquiring into the peculiarities of his situation or its similarity to their own; the only question asked is, "what" he did, not "why" he did it? Had David then, had Job, or other good men applied the relief of suicide to their afflictions and sufferings, it might have staggered many in their opinion of its unlawfulness; but when men of mixed, or indifferent, or wicked characters alone are found in scripture to have perpetrated it, this adds no sanction to the deed, but of itself depreciates its innocence. David we know put his trust in the Lord for deliverance from his troubles; and "amid all his losses (says Bishop Pearce of Job) he lost not "his sense of his duty to God [G]:" and therefore under all his excess of anguish, though he frequently wishes and prays, that death would "overtake" him, yet he never proposes to end his miseries at a stroke, by laying violent hands on himself. He considered his distresses as falling on him by the appointment or permission of God, and therefore patiently to be endured, till the same God should think fit to deliver him from them. "Shall we receive good "at the hand of God (was Job's language of patience) and shall we not receive "evil?—All the days of my appointed time will I "wait," till my change "come." As the holy men, therefore, in the Old Testament were never known to apply this remedy to their afflictions, it is more than probable that it proceeded from their opinion of its unlawfulness in the sight of God. But the Apostles and first saints under the Gospel-covenant make no small discovery of their own opinions and sentiments concerning its utter unlawfulness, by living themselves through such an overwhelming torrent of afflictions and sufferings, and striving as they did against every kind of persecution and torment. Had they deemed suicide any ways becoming, "to die (by their own hands) would have been gain to them" in every sense of the words [H].

[G] See his Sermon on Suicide.

[H] "At enim multi se interemerunt, ne in manus hostium pervenirent. Non modo querimus, utrum sit factum, sed utrum fuerit faciendum? Sana quippe ratio etiam exemplis anteponenda est, cui quidem & exempla concordant, sed illa quæ tanto digniora sunt imitatione, quanto excellentiora pietate. Non fecerunt Patriarchæ, non Prophetæ, non Apostoli, quia & ipse Dominus Christus, quando eos si persecutionem paterentur, fugere admonuit de civitate in civitatem, potuit admonere, ut sibi manus inferrent, ne in manus persecutorum pervenirent. Porro, si hoc ille non iussit aut monuit, ut eo modo Sui ex hac vitâ migrarent, quibus migrantibus mansiones æternas se preparaturum esse promisit, qualibet exempla opponant Gentes, quæ ignorant Deum, manifestum est, hoc non licere colentibus unum verum Deum."—AUGUSTINUS de Civitate Dei, Lib. I. c. xxii.

In some of the early ages of Christianity, when a degree of enthusiasm had been grafted on the purity and simplicity of the Christian Faith, there want not examples of many pious persons, who became suicides under a notion of doing honour to God, by showing this particular zeal for his service; and there were cases in which some of the ancient [1] Fathers thought it was not only a justifiable, but a meritorious action: as for instance, when a man doubted his own resolution to abide cruel tortures, and was therefore afraid of being compelled to deny the Faith, or commit an act of idolatry; and also in the case of virgins, who, having devoted themselves to unblemished chastity in honour of the Gospel, were in danger of violation. Some were likewise tempted to commit suicide through a mistaken notion of the nature and excellence of martyrdom. There were many, who carried their ideas of the glory of martyrdom to that height, that they determined to die, whether called to it or not, in behalf of the Christian Faith. These thought it lawful in the paroxysms of their ill-judged zeal, to put themselves to death, if they could not find others ready to do it for them. But such was the effect of an heated imagination, being in no shape connected with the credit of religion, or that crown of true martyrdom, which they were coveting [κ] by these unnecessary sacrifices.

But as to the first case (want of resolution), who knows his own strength or weakness, till put to the trial?—to endure which trial, every divine comfort and heavenly support is promised. Besides, the true Christian is proved, is made perfect by sufferings; not by flying from, but by enduring them. Timidity, as opposed to a bold confidence in our strength, is indeed an amiable and truly Christian virtue; but it should lead us to put our trust in the divine assistance in the hour of danger, not to drive us into the paths of despair and suicide. To what purpose would peculiar blessings have been proposed, as the rewards of suffering persecution, if it had been lawful to cut our own persecution short by suicide? The Faith in Christ is at least equally hurt in the

[1] The opinions of some of the Fathers on suicide in general, and on the cases of some Christian suicides in particular, together with the Decrees of Councils, &c. against suicide, are collected in a subsequent Part. Notice will also be hereafter taken of many, who destroyed themselves on religious motives.—See Part V. c. i. and Part VI. c. i.

[κ] See an account of the Donatists in Part V. c. i.

opinion of others, by thus flying from troubles and not daring to confront danger, as it could be by any recantation visibly forced from the sufferer by the extremity of bodily pain. We should have just grounds for concluding any one to be a guilty person, a counterfeit and impostor in whatever he professed, who, being threatened with a public trial and severe punishment, was found previously murdered by his own hand in prison. Much the same would be the case of a Christian suicide, who should take that method of avoiding the persecutions of his enemies: and therefore it does not seem likely to promote that glory to God and belief in his son Jesus (but rather to do the contrary), which these timid Christians are afraid of hurting, by means of their irresolution in the hour of persecution. It would be cruel and unjust however to condemn such conscientious perpetrators of suicide for their error in judgment. An action may be censurable in its own nature, which yet may imply no guilt in the performer; a zeal without knowledge may be dangerous to others, but does not of necessary consequence always imply personal guilt in its follower.

As to that suicide, which has been thought allowable under fear of compulsion to idolatrous acts, it may receive much the same answer as the former, being indeed a plea of much the same nature, though under different terms. The proposals of an idolatrous act can only be made under the threatenings of tortures in case of refusal; and then the question returns into the breast of the persecuted Christian, "Can I bear to undergo such torments with resolution" "and without wavering, or may I not rather rid myself at once of the hazard" "by suicide, and thus maintain the glory of God unimpaired in my person?" If suicide were an indifferent action, it might bear an argument in this case; but being contrary in its spirit and views to the whole tenour of a Christian's faith and morality, the former of which bids him look up to God for strength in his weakness, and the latter comforts him with the assurance of being made perfect through sufferings, it must be resigned as indefensible. It was the meekness and resignation of the Christian, and his readiness to undergo whatever might be imposed in consequence of his refusal to bow down before the statue of Trajan, that induced [L] the amiable Pliny to speak

[L] See his famous Letter to Trajan, and that Emperor's humane reply in Plin. Ep. 97. and 98. Lib. X.

mildly of his case, and unwillingly to give judgment against such inoffensive members of society. On the contrary, had the principal members of the Christian Church, who were brought before him, endeavoured to dispatch themselves, whenever persecution threatened them, this would have prejudiced the Proconsul very little in their favour. He would then very naturally have been led to surmise, that some dangerous plots and secret machinations against the empire lurked under the cloak of this new sect; since its principal members thus fled from inquiry on the approach of danger [M].

The case of the Virgins, who in the early ages of the Church often destroyed themselves, when there was imminent danger of violation, seems to require a share of compassion, though there is no room for defence on any true Christian principle [N]. They were ready and desirous of submitting to every kind of cruelty, and earnestly sought the crown of martyrdom; but the crown of virginity was still more precious in their sight, and the only step to preserve that, was many times by laying violent hands on themselves. But God heeds (we know) the pure intentions of the heart before any outward action whatever, and will never deprive us of our reward on account of, much less consider as a fault in us, the compulsory violence of others. The idea of virginity was moreover stretched to an high degree of enthusiasm in those days.

It would be a laborious task to cull out all that has been said on these occasions [O] by the primitive Fathers; it may suffice to observe here, that the case of virgin-suicide seems most to claim their pity and even their approbation; nor have they failed to admit the names of many such women into the lists of martyrs; and yet it would be difficult (as was before observed) to reconcile even their self-destruction with any solid principle of Christianity. But seeing that the judgments of God are incomprehensible and the depth of his counsels

[M] See a Letter of Trajan to Pliny (Book X.), wherein he charges him to guard against the institution of particular societies or combinations of men, as dangerous to the tranquillity of the state: and under this predicament the Christians were usually considered; particularly as they refused to worship in the common mode. Their suicide on persecution would have riveted this opinion.

[N] See more of Virgin-suicide and opinions concerning it, Part V. c. i.

[O] Some notice however will be taken of them in Part V. c. i. and Part VI. c. i.

beyond our finite capacities to discover, it would be a great instance of our uncharitable disposition to pretend to determine the state of such in the other world, who have upon very extraordinary accounts been tempted to commit suicide. "This is one of God's secrets (says Taylor on this subject), which "the great day will bring to light [P]." The times of tribulation and persecution for the Cross of Christ are now happily at an end. We shall seldom be called on to maintain our faith at the hazard of our lives, or be put to the trial of becoming martyrs to our religious opinions. As these violences have ceased, so with them must even these pretences to the lawfulness or expediency of religious suicide have also ceased. The glory of God is now to be pursued in our "Lives," not by our voluntary deaths; nor does there remain any one rational or even enthusiastic ground for suicide in the Christian of these days. When it is perpetrated, as the winding up a life of iniquity and sin, (as is too generally the case) it never reasons on Christian, but philosophic grounds; and on the principles of that philosophy alone, which not only scorns to be improved or enlightened by revelation, but is also frequently under the pre-judice of some strong passion. From whence there is sufficient ground to maintain, that when suicide is at all imputable, (as not flowing from some degree of insanity) it either proceeds from acknowledged, practical sin, or from speculative scepticism and infidelity, or from the conjunction of both. It would be hard to find an instance in these days, or in those preceding them, since the storms of religious persecution have ceased, of a "practical believer in Christ," who at the same time enjoyed a sound share of health, who either put an end to his own life on the result of cool deliberation, or argued in favour of the practice in others.

But it having been asserted, that the idea of suicide or compassing our own death immediately, is condemned by every principle of Christianity, it may be necessary to inquire, how far it can be justifiable according to the same principles, to follow such employments or professions, as unavoidably tend to hazard and endanger our lives? Now the essential difference between actual suicide and the pursuing such plans of life, as may endanger our existence here

[P] See *Ductor Dubitantium*. Chap. on Suicide.

and

and probably shorten our days, is this; that in the former, our whole aim and design is immediately and actually to compass our own death; in the latter, we have some other end in view, for the accomplishment of which it may be necessary to put our lives into some hazard, though far from certain of losing them in the event. In the one case we directly lay violent hands on ourselves, in the other we only submit (if necessary) to the natural course of events arising from a certain cause. The only inquiry then is, whether the end we are pursuing be in itself laudable? This must be determined by the moral precepts of Christianity; which require us in general to contribute to the comfort and happiness of one another. The religion of Christ is social; if therefore society itself cannot be maintained, or the good of the whole community pursued without some individuals undergoing some inconvenience, some danger of life itself, then it cannot be sinful, according to the law of God, to hazard our lives for the benefit of the community, or in pursuit of our own immediate interest, provided that interest be important and in no degree forbidden by the laws of Christianity [Q].”

It is now necessary to pause a while and review the progress, which has been made. The “general” guilt of suicide has been sufficiently proved,—from searching into the distant preparations of the mind towards its accomplishment;—from an enumeration of its immediate incitements;—from its mean and dastardly harbinger Despair;—and also from some of the principles leading to it, in defiance of our own hearty desires of life. Its “special” guilt was found,—in its being contrary to every impulse of nature;—in its being an offence against God, as our natural and moral governor;—against the good order of society in general, and of individuals and families in particular;—and also against every interest of self both here and hereafter;—and lastly, to strengthen the above deductions from natural and moral obligation, in its being against every principle of the Christian law. Having likewise noticed and answered the chief objections that occurred under each head, the evidence might here be closed, and judgment pronounced in utter condemnation of suicide. Yet still as it is wished to

[Q.] The lawfulness of hazarding our lives (though not of committing suicide) is also considered in Part II. c. i. and in Part VI. Chapters on Donne and Hume.

render

render the consideration of the subject as complete as possible, it may not be unentertaining at least, if not profitable and instructive, to inquire into the remains of Antiquity on the subject, and into many other historical and critical points connected with it, both of ancient and modern date. These may be considered as auxiliaries [R] and illustrations, which, though not at all times directly argumentative, yet, when concentrated in one point of union, contribute no small weight of additional proof, to establish the great sinfulness of self-murder.

[R] See a passage in the *Strictures on Donne*, Part VI. c. i. relative to the proper use of examples, customs and opinions in aid of argument.

END OF THE THIRD PART.

PART

P A R T IV.

HISTORICAL INQUIRY INTO THE OPINIONS AND PRACTICES, THE LAWS
AND CUSTOMS OF THE HEATHEN WORLD RELATIVE TO SUICIDE.

C H A P. I.

Vague notions of a future state prevented the Heathens from reasoning closely on this subject.—Such philosophers as entertained the most rational ideas of the nature of God and man, proportionably condemned the practice of suicide.—Religious suicide among Asiatic nations.—Character and tenets of the priests and followers of Bramah.—Great antiquity of the Gentoos, and purity of their original religion.—Men of all nations travelled into the East to learn wisdom of the Bramans.—Corruption of the Bramanic faith and worship long before the age of Christianity.—Two sects of ancient Bramans, the “austere” and the “social.”—Enthusiasm of the austere sect, who were also called by the Greeks, Gymnosophists.—Their self-devotions or religious suicide: burning alive.—Calanus’s voluntary burning in the camp of Alexander.—The social sect of Bramans, not such general favourers of suicide, but only in particular cases.—The burning of wives on their husband’s funeral pile approved by them all.—This custom prevails at this day, as well as formerly.—Contest between the wives of Ceteus, an Indian officer, about 2000 years ago, which should burn; how decided; the burning and intrepidity of the younger wife.—Burning of the wife of Rhaam Chund in the year 1743 at Cassimbuzaar.—Opinions on the origin of this extraordinary sacrifice.—Attempts to ascertain its antiquity unsatisfactory.—Only general ideas to be formed concerning its origin; from the notion, which obtained among all savage nations, that what was dear or useful to the deceased in this world, would be equally

equally so in the next: hence an immolation of wives, friends, slaves, &c. at the burial of a chief prevailed in many countries.—The custom of one wife burning in India too, ancient to have its origin ascertained.—Account of code of Gentoo-laws, and what respects burning of wives.—Neither compulsory nor totally optional, since conditions are annexed to a refusal—inviolable chastity.—Variety of circumstances ingrafted on the original simplicity of the law.—Women worked up by the household Braman (or Bramin, as called in modern times) to undergo this death as most honourable.—Not hastily to condemn the conduct of these women, who thus endeavour to make their “practice” coincide with their “principles.”

THOUGH the merits of the question before us do not materially depend on any opinions and customs of the Heathens concerning it, yet an investigation of them may be attended with utility, if it be only to give the reader a just notion of what “were” the sentiments of the ancients respecting suicide, which are often misrepresented by modern writers in its favour, who adapt them to their own purposes. The experience of intervening ages, the progressive state of knowledge and its easy method of communication; but above all, “the Light of Revelation,” which has illumined the obscurity of human wisdom, and opened a clear prospect of futurity, has also taught “us” in these later ages to argue on a much surer and firmer ground than the Heathens could do, with respect to the true nature of self-murder. This consideration renders the present writer very easy with regard to the event of this part of his inquiry, even though it should prove to a certain degree in favour of suicide; since its perpetration can receive no just establishment in modern approbation from ancient opinions or practice. But if it should be found, that such philosophers as argued most rationally concerning the Deity, the state of man here and his prospects in futurity, condemned in the same proportion the practice of suicide, this will be an additional point gained towards a conviction of its unlawfulness. Thus much premised, let us begin our researches among the Asiatics.

There seems to have existed through all ages in those vast regions of the East, which have followed the doctrines of Bramah, a strong propensity towards a religious or enthusiastic kind of suicide. The Bramans (or Bramins, as they are now called) have ever been the priests and philosophers of the great

Gentoo or Hindoo[s] nation. Their character has been at all times held sacred; and they possess at this day an unlimited sway over the minds of the people, through the great empire of Indostan. Great pains have been taken of late years to dive into the present mysterious jargon of Asiatic idolatry; and great discoveries have been made relative to a native purity in the religion [r] ascribed to

[s] The Gentoos seem to have been the aborigines or proper natives of all India, both within and beyond the Ganges, if not of a much larger extent of country. The name of Hindoos seems partial, and only to belong properly to those Gentoos, who inhabit Indostan (or Hindostan). But the Gentoos of the Peninsula extra Gangem have undergone so much alteration within themselves, and have been so subdivided into different kingdoms and states, which have each formed a religion, as well as laws of their own, that the general name Gentoo, as well as Braman or Bramin, seems lost among them; having given way to others of more modern distinction. Yet it is very evident, amid all their variety of idolatrous corruption, that the religions of Siam, of Tonquin, of Thibet and other places, as far as they are known to Europeans, derive their origin from that of Bramah. In the preface to the Dialogues of Kreesna (or supposed incarnation of the Deity) and his favourite Arjoon, translated from the Sanskreet or sacred language of the Gentoos, by Wilkins, and published in 1785, Arjoon is called one of the sons of Pandoo, who is said to have reigned, about 5000 years ago, over the empire of Bharet-varsh; which included all the country between Persia and China, and from the snowy mountain to the southern promontory.

The following extract is from the "History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan from the year 1745." Published 1763. Quarto, Anon. but given to Mr. Orme.—(In the previous dissertation on the establishments made by Mahomedan conquerors in India).—"Indostan has been inhabited, from the earliest antiquity, by a people, who have no resemblance either in their figures or manners with any of the nations, which are contiguous to them. Although these nations have at different times sent conquerors among them, who have established themselves in different parts of the country; although the Mogul Tartars under Tamerlane and his successors have at last rendered themselves lords of almost the whole of it; yet the original inhabitants have lost very little of their original character by the establishment of these strangers among them.—Besides the particular denominations which they receive from the casts and countries in which they are born, there is one more general, which is applied indiscriminately to distinguish the original natives from all, who have intruded themselves among them;—"Hendoo," from whence Indian.—The Indians have lost all memory of the ages in which they began to believe in Vishnu, Esvara, Brama, and an hundred thousand divinities subordinate to these. Here and there a moral or metaphysical allegory, and sometimes a trace of the history of a first legislator, is discernible in their absurd stories of their gods; but in general they are so very extravagant and incoherent, that we should be left to wonder, how a people so reasonable in other respects should have adopted such a code of nonsense, as a creed of religion, did we not find the same credulity in the histories of nations much more enlightened." (N. B. This refers only to the "present" state of their religion.)

[r] "Bramah is a title appropriated in the Sanscrit-language, to the Promulger of the Shastah (or Gentoo-scriptures as they are called). He is said to have been a being of the first rank of angels, destined

to Bramah, and that it was strongly tinged with primary and fundamental truths, though at the same time couched under much allegory and fable. No antiquity seems too high to be ascribed to the Gentoo nation, who were probably seated in their present situation soon after the flood, and have continued in the same ever since, with a wonderful preservation of their ancient manners and customs, as far as we can trace any knowledge of them. It seems more and more to open upon us, that the wise men [v] of all ancient nations travelled into the East to increase their knowledge and wisdom; and that the Egyptians, as well as the Greeks, owed much of their philosophy and religion to the communication of their own sages with the Indian Bramans. This is not a place to enter further on these points; since our subject only leads to a consideration of certain "corruptions" in the Bramanic faith and worship; not to what it contained in its original purity [x] and simplicity.

But

"defined to descend and instruct the inhabitants of the Eastern parts of the globe; whom God dignified with the name of Bramah, in allusion to the spirituality and divinity of his mission and doctrines."—See HOLWELL'S Interesting Events, &c. relative to the Provinces of Bengal, Vol. I. Part II. p. 7 and 11. 2d Edit. 1766.

[v] The names of Zardhurst (Zoroaster) and Pythagore (Pythagoras) retain a place in the Gentoo-annals, "as Travellers in search of Wisdom."—HOLWELL, Vol. I. Part II. p. 25.

[x] For further information concerning the original purity of the doctrines of Bramah, and those confused traces of the revelation made to Adam and his posterity, and on many other curious points respecting the Gentoos—see "Holwell's Interesting Events, &c. relative to the Provinces of Bengal;" and, "Wilkins's Translation of the Bhagvaat Geeta, or Dialogues of Kreeshma and Arjoon, from the Sankreet or ancient language of the Bramans," 1785. Also "Code of Gentoo-Laws translated from the Shanfcrit-language (through the medium of the Persian) by Halhed," 1777. N. B. The Shanfcrit-language has long ceased to be the vulgar one of the Gentoos; and the knowledge of it has been confined to a few of the more learned Bramins. There are two great sects among the Gentoos; the followers of the "Viedam" and of the "Shaftah," (of which last the Geeta is a part.) "These books (says Holwell in his Preliminary Discourse) contain the institutes of their respective religion and worship, (often couched under allegory and fable) as well as the history of their ancient Rajahs and Princes. Their antiquity is contended for by the partisans of each; but the similitude of their names, idols, and great part of their worship, leaves little room to doubt, nay plainly evinces, that both these scriptures were originally one. And, if we compare the great purity and chaste manners of the Shaftah, with the great absurdities and impurities of the Viedam, we need not hesitate to pronounce the latter to be a corruption of the former. The Viedam is followed by the Gentoos of the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts, and also by those of the Island of Ceylon. The Shaftah is followed by the Gentoos of the provinces of Bengal, and by all those of the rest of India,

But even these deviations are of high antiquity; since long before the age of Christianity, the priests of Bramah seem to have set up an affected semblance of piety, which gave them indeed an extraordinary credit in vulgar estimation, but was in itself undeserving of much rational applause. They were become so austere and rigid in their manners, as scarcely to deign to hold converse with their fellow-citizens, much less with [y] strangers; they disdained to inhabit cities or even villages, but lived by themselves in the mountains, or along the banks of rivers, exercising themselves in abstinence and acts of self-mortification. Wonderful however are the accounts given by ancient writers of the patience, self-denial and fortitude of these zealous priests. Their enthusiasm was such, that they not only rejected all covering for the body (from whence their Grecian name [z] of Gymnosophists) but thus exposed, would stand whole days in one posture with their faces towards the sun, when its rays were most direct and piercing, or being in other climates would endure as great a degree of [A] cold. They lived in the constant practice of abstinence and mortification and contempt of death. But above all things, they deemed it a mark of weakness and pusillanimity, as well as to be below the dignity of a philosophic mind, calmly

"commonly called India Proper, or within the Ganges and Indus."—There is great reason to hope for much important information from the Society lately instituted at Calcutta in 1784 by Sir William Jones, for "Inquiring into the general History and Literature of Asia." Especially as it is said, that the more learned Bramins have laid aside much of their jealousy towards the English, and are willing to furnish them with their materials of knowledge.

[y] See an account of Alexander's meeting with the Indian sages in the historians of that monarch.

[z] Apuleius seems enamoured of their wisdom. "Est præterea genus apud Indos præstabile, Gymnosophistæ vocantur; hos ego maxime admiror, quod homines sunt periti, non propagandæ vitis, nec inoculandarum arborum, nec proscindendi soli. Non illi nôrunt arvum colere, vel aurum colare, vel equum domare, vel taurum subigere, vel ovem vel capram tondere vel pascere—quid igitur est? Unum pro his omnibus nôrunt, "Sapientiam" percolunt, tam magistri senes quam discipuli juniores."—APULEIUS, Floridorum, Lib. I.

[A] "Quæ barbaria Indiâ vastior & agrestior? In eâ tamen gente ii, qui sapientes habentur, nudi ætatem agunt, & Caucaſi nives hiemaleque vim perferunt sine dolore; cumque ad flammam se applicaverint, sine gemitu aduruntur."—CIC. Tusc. V. 27.

"Apud Indos verò patientiæ meditatio tam obstinate usurpari creditur, ut sint, qui omne vitæ tempus nudi exigant, modò Caucaſi montis glaciali rigore corpora sua durantes, modò flammis sine ullo gemitu objicientes; atque haud parva his gloria contemptu doloris acquiritur: titulus namque sapientiæ datur."—VALERIUS MAXIMUS, Lib. III. c. iii.

to await the approaches of death and to suffer themselves to be overtaken by it. Whenever therefore old age advanced upon them, or sickness began to oppress them, they held it glorious to "anticipate" their last hour, by voluntarily ascending the funeral pile, and suffering themselves to be burned alive; exhibiting at the same time a proof of their fortitude, in the firmness with which they endured the scorching pains. Their principle [B] was, "that a body worn
 "with old age (to which therefore they never paid any particular respect) or
 "emaciated, with disease, polluted the pile on which it was burned, and was
 "therefore an unfit offering to be made to the Deity: but that in order to
 "render the sacrifice more acceptable, it should be voluntary, and the funeral
 "pile should be ascended for the purpose of purifying the soul, while there
 "remained not only life, but a certain degree of health and strength in the
 "body."

There is a remarkable instance on record of the practical influence of these principles in the person of Calanus, an Indian sage, who, though it was contrary to the institutions of his severe sect, was prevailed on to follow the camp of Alexander. This philosopher, being attacked in his old age by a fit of sickness (the first he had ever experienced), obtained leave of that monarch to ascend the funeral pile in presence of the whole army. After various ceremonies performed, and having taken a cheerful leave of his friends, whom he

[B] "Quis credat inter hæc vitia curam esse sapientiæ? Unum agreste & horridum genus est, quos Sapientes vocant: apud hos occupare fati diem pulchrum, & vivos se cremari jubent, quibus aut segnis ætas, aut incommoda valetudo est; expectatam mortem pro dedecore vitæ habent; nec ullus corporibus, quæ senectus solvit, honos redditur; inquinari putant ignem, nisi qui spirantes recipit. Illi, qui in urbibus publicis moribus degunt, siderum motus scitè spectare dicuntur & futura prædicare; nec quenquam admovere leti diem credunt, cui expectare interrito liceat."—Q. CURTIUS, Lib. VIII. c. ix.

"They are so disposed (speaking of Indians) towards death, that they would willingly cut short their whole period of life, and thus hasten to the emancipation of the soul from the body. For the most part, they depart out of life, when in good health and free from all misfortune; but they do not take this step without advising others of their intentions, among whom they seldom find an opponent. They throw themselves on the fire, that thus the soul may be separated in greater purity from the body, and that they may gain an high commendation. Their friends find it easier to impel them to this voluntary death, than men in other places can be persuaded to take a long journey. They bewail them, as long as they continue in life, but they proclaim them happy and gainers of immortality, as soon as they have freed themselves from its incumbrance."—PORPHYRY writes to the above purport, *De abstinentiâ*, Lib. IV.

intreated to spend the rest of the day merrily [c], to feast and carouse with Alexander, he endured the scorching flames with uncommon intrepidity and to the amazement of the surrounding spectators. But historians inform us, that the action underwent [D] a variety of judgments. Some applauded the hero; more pitied the madman; while the generality deemed it, as perhaps it truly was, an ostentatious parade of pride and vain [E] glory. The spectators indeed on this occasion were chiefly Greeks; but there were Indian philosophers also, who would have determined in the same manner. For there was a mild and more social sect of Bramans, who, living in cities and free intercourse with men, judged not so favourably of unprovoked suicide; and who seem in this instance to have paid more regard to their original law, as will appear hereafter. It was esteemed by these to be neither an act of bravery nor of virtue, voluntarily to shorten life's period on a needless occasion. Devoid of enthusiasm in their living manners, they affected not the praise of extraordinary fortitude in their mode of dying; but thought it a duty to submit patiently to sickness

[C] Alexander ordered musical and athletic exercises to be performed, and a funeral oration to be spoken over the ashes of Calanus, in honour of that philosopher. In order also to afford a proper opportunity to Calanus's friends to take his dying advice—"to feast and carouse with Alexander"—the King proposed a drinking-bout with prizes to the conquerors. Accounts add, that between 30 and 40 competitors expired on the spot in this despicable contest; and that the greatest swallower of liquor and consequently the first champion, was one Promachus, of drunken memory, who guzzled down a quantity of wine equal to 28 pints of our measure; according to Arbuthnot, who makes the *χους* or congius, (of which Promachus swallowed the contents of four) equal to 7 pints.—See PLUTARCH'S *Life of Alexander*, and *ATHENÆUS*, Lib. X.

[D] Tully arguing on stoical principles in favour of divination thus speaks of Calanus's death. "Est profecto quiddam etiam in barbaris gentibus præsentiens atque divinus; si quidem ad mortem proficiscens Calanus Indus, cum ascenderet in rogam ardentem "O præclarum discessum (inquit) e vitâ, cum ut Herculi contigit, mortali corpore cremato, in lucem animus excesserit"! Cumque Alexander eum rogaret, si quid vellet, ut diceret, "Optime (inquit): propediem te videbo." Quod ita contigit; nam Babylone paucis post diebus Alexander est mortuus."—De Div. Lib. I.

[E] See Diod. Sic. XVII. Arrian VII. and Plutarch. This last in his *Life of Alexander* relates, "that the same thing was done a long time after by another Indian, who came with Cæsar to Athens, where "they still show you the Indian's monument." This Braman's name was Zarmatrus. He came ambassador from the Indians to Augustus in Greece; and in order to gain glory to his nation and to himself for firmness and fortitude, (being also advanced in years) he, according to the rites of his country, voluntarily ascended a burning pile in the presence of Augustus, and was consumed to ashes.—See also DION CASSIUS, Hist. Rom. Lib. LIV.

and to the other evils of life, to cherish their existence as long as it was permitted them, and to wait with resignation to the divine will for the [F] stroke of death.

But

[F] It was not without reason asserted above, that the present subject only led to a consideration of certain "corruptions" in the doctrines of Bramah; since the following passage in the Shaftah, produced by Mr. Holwell, expressly forbids the practice of suicide under severe punishment. "The mortal forms (the Almighty Being is supposed giving these directions to Bramah to communicate on earth), wherewith I shall encompass the delinquent "Debtah" are the work of my hand; they shall not be destroyed, but left to their natural decay. Therefore whichever of the Debtah shall by designed violence bring about the dissolution of the mortal forms animated by their delinquent brethren—Thou, "Sieb," shalt plunge the offending spirit into the "Onderah" for a space; and he shall be doomed to pass again the eighty-nine transmigrations to whatsoever stage he may be arrived at the time of such his offence. But "whosoever shall dare to free himself by violence from the mortal form, wherewith I shall inclose him"—Thou, Sieb, shalt plunge him into Onderah forever."—

HOLWELL, Vol. I. Part ii. p. 52.

N. B. Debtah were angels; some of whom having rebelled against the Deity in Heaven, were thrown down by Him into Onderah, or a place of intense darkness, where they were to suffer punishment for ever. But some of the faithful angelic host interceding for their fallen brethren, the Almighty agreed they should be released from Onderah and placed in a state of trial and probation, to work out, if they pleased, their future restoration. For this purpose fifteen "Boboons" (regions or planets) of purgation and purification were created; and the delinquent Debtahs were released from Onderah. They were to pass through seven boboons of purgation below, and then to come upon earth the eighth. Here they had bodies given them of different animals; and they were to pass through 87 changes or transmigrations; the last of which in the brute-form was to be the "Ghoii or Cow"; which from its usefulness to mankind was held in the highest veneration, especially among a nation not suffered (on account of these supposed transmigrations) to kill any living creature, or to eat animal food. After this the delinquent Debtah were to animate the forms of "Mhurd" or Man, with an enlargement of their intellectual powers; and this was to form the chief and last trial or probation. In which if they behaved well, there were seven boboons of purification to be passed through above the earth, before they were to be admitted again into Heaven. Those, who behaved not well in Mhurd, were cast down into Onderah to begin again. Sieb was a principal angel, to whom power was committed in Heaven. We see from the above extract, that those were to be punished more severely, who killed "themselves," than those, who killed "another person." The latter being sent back into "Onderah" for a time only, the former for ever. "The sudden death of infants (according to the Bramans) marks the spirit favoured of God, and that it is immediately received into the bosom of Bistnou (the Preserver) and conveyed to the first region of purification. The sudden death of adults on the contrary, they pronounce to be a mark of God's wrath against the animating spirit, as its term of probation in "Mhurd" is cut short. The great age of man, when it is accompanied with the enjoyment of his faculties and understanding, is pronounced by the Bramans, to be the greatest blessing God can bestow upon this mortal state, as thereby the term of the spirit's probation is prolonged: adding, "that

But though the more rational and original tenets of oriental philosophy and religion did not countenance self-murder, yet that thorough contempt of life, which early possessed the Bramans, in opposition to the real principles of their faith, tended much that way, and led them very early to encourage and applaud the voluntary sacrifice of life on many occasions. Mild and lenient beyond other nations, in what regarded the life of all other animals, the Gentoos soon became cruel to themselves alone. A sufficient proof of this exists in the well-known voluntary sacrifice of life in the East, which the Gentoo-wives make in honour of their husbands, by burning themselves alive on their funeral piles. This custom, though perhaps not so generally prevalent as formerly, because both Christians and Mahometans join in discountenancing it, yet frequently prevails through the empire of Indostan, and is not only well authenticated by all ancient and modern writers on Indian affairs, but has numberless living witnesses of the fact, who have themselves been present at the exhibition of such dreadful spectacles. This also is a religious suicide, grounded on the hopes and promises of extraordinary reward hereafter. A compliance with this custom is very strongly inculcated into the minds of women from their infancy by the household Bramin. It is held to be the most honourable and glorious termination of life that can befall them, as well as of the most singular importance to the interests of themselves and families. Hence the female breast on such occasions seems to forget all its amiable softness, to be cruel to itself in the midst of its general humanity, and to conquer its natural timidity by undauntedly rushing into the devouring flames. Neither ancient nor modern instances of such female intrepidity are wanting. We will first produce an example or two, to show the prevalence of the custom in distant times, and how similar its attendant ceremonies have been in all ages; after which the Gentoo law on the subject shall be produced and such reflections subjoined as seem pertinent to the business.

“that the limited space of one hundred years, decreed by God in the present age, is full short for the works of repentance and goodness; and that when the life and understanding is preserved beyond that limited term, it ought to be deemed a signal mark of God’s special grace and favour.”—See HOLWELL as above.

This agrees better with the opinion of the milder sect of Bramans than with the austere ones, such as Calanus, &c.

“The

"The contest was strong between the two wives of an Indian officer named Ceteus, who had been slain [G] in battle, which should have the distinguishing privilege of burning on her husband's funeral pile (for to one only it was permitted to make this bloody sacrifice). One pleaded her priority of conjugal attachment; the other objected her rival's pregnancy, and that she could not consistently with the laws destroy her infant with herself. The reasoning of the younger wife being admitted, the elder retired with the strongest marks of dejection and despondency; as if she had been found guilty of some great offence. But the other rejoicing in her victory, approached the pile crowned with garlands, and clothed in all bridal array. She was led forth by her nearest relations, who sang hymns in celebration of her virtues. She then distributed the ornamental parts of her dress, which was very rich and much adorned with jewels among her surrounding friends. Having taken her last farewell, she was conducted up the pile by her own brother and thus finished her life heroically amid the shouts and acclamations of an immense crowd of spectators. All the troops under arms marched thrice round the pile, while the combustibles were lighting up; and she, embracing her husband's dead body, expressed no ignoble fears or apprehensions as the flames approached her. This heroine excited the pity of some spectators; whilst others broke forth into extravagant praises of her fortitude: but some of the Greeks, who were present, reprobated such practices as barbarous and inhuman:"—and inhuman surely must be those principles, which can glory in the immolation of such tender [H] victims.

Yet

[G] The battle was fought between Antigonus and Eumenes near the Tigris, some time after the death of Alexander the Great: and the following account is the substance of what is to be found in Diod. Sic. Lib. XIX.

[H] "*Mulieres verò in India, cum est cujusvis earum vir mortuus, in certamen judiciumque veniunt, quam plurimum ille dilexerit; plures enim singulis solent esse nuptæ. Quæ est victrix, ea læta, prosequentibus suis, unà cum viro in rogam imponitur, illa victa, læsta discedit.*"—Cic. Tusc. Disp. Lib. V. 27.

"Respiciantur Indorum feminae; quæ cum more patrio complures eidem nuptæ esse soleant, mortuo marito, in certamen judiciumque veniunt, quam ex iis maxime dilexerat; victrix gaudio exultans, deductaque a necessariis lætum præferens vultum, conjugis se flammis superjacet, & cum eo tanquam felicissima crematur; superatæ cum tristitiâ & mærore in vitâ remanent. Protrahe in medium Cimbricam audaciam; adijce Celtibericam fidem; junge animosam Thraciæ sapientiam; connecte Lyci-

Yet the custom of wives' burning continues to this day in various parts of India, and is attended with much the same ceremonies, as it was near two thousand years ago, when the widow of Ceteus expired amid the flames. It is a spectacle often viewed (though with horror) by our own countrymen, who visit that part of the world. The following is an account of a modern victim to her husband's manes, the intrepidity of whose behaviour through such a fiery trial could not have been exceeded by any in former days. It shall be given in Mr. Holwell's own words, who was himself a spectator of the awful scene. "It will not we hope be unacceptable, if we present our readers with
 "an instance of steadiness and resolution, which happened some years past at
 "the East-India Company's Factory at Caffimbuzaar, in the time of Sir Francis
 "Rusfel's chieffhip; the writer of this and several other gentlemen of the
 "Factory were present, some of whom are now living. At five o'clock on
 "the morning of the fourth of February 1742-3, died Rhaam Chund, Pundit
 "of the Mahahrattor tribe, aged twenty-eight; his widow (for he had but
 "one [1] wife), aged between seventeen and eighteen, as soon as he expired,
 "disdaining

orum in luctibus abjiciendis callidi quæsitam rationem:—Indico tamen rogo nihil eorum præferes, quem uxores pietas in modum genialis tori propinquæ mortis secura confendit."—VAL. MAX. Lib. II. c. vi.

The beautiful and accomplished Panthea, whose conjugal attachment is so exquisitely described by Xenophon (Cyrop. Lib. VII.) seemed to have caught the spirit of Indian suicide (but in a more voluntary and disinterested manner) when she slew herself on the dead body of her beloved Abradates.—Dido's burning seems also copied after an Indian original.

At regina pyrâ, penetrali in sede, sub auras
 Erectâ ingenti, tædis atque ilice sectâ,
 Intenditque locum fertis & fronde coronat
 Funeræ: super exuvias enfemque relictum
 Effigiemque toro locat, haud ignara futuri—
 Confendit furibunda rogos—
 Incubuitque toro dixitque novissima verba;
 Accipite hanc animam, &c. —Æn. IV.

[1] "The Indian's manners are gentle. His happiness consists in the solaces of a domestic life; to which sufficiently inclined by the climate, he is obliged by his religion, which esteems matrimony a duty indispensable in every man, who does not quit the world to unite himself to God (such is their phrase). Although permitted by his religion to have several, he is seldom the husband of more than one wife; and this wife is of a decency of demeanour, of a solicitude in her family and of a
 "fidelity

“disdaining to wait the term allowed her (twenty-four hours) for reflection, immediately declared to the Bramins and witnesses present, her resolution to burn. As the family was of no small consideration, all the merchants of Cassimbazaar, and her relations, left no arguments unessayed to dissuade her from it. Lady Ruffel, with the tenderest humanity, sent her several messages to the same purport;—the infant-state of her children (two girls and a boy) and the terrors and pain of the death she sought were painted to her in the strongest and most lively colouring—she was deaf to all; she gratefully thanked Lady Ruffel and sent her word, “she had now nothing to live for, but recommended her children to her protection.” When the torments of burning were urged in terrorem, she with a resolved and calm countenance put her finger into the fire, and held it there [κ] a considerable time; she then with one hand put fire in the palm of the other, sprinkled incense upon it and fumigated the Bramins. The consideration of her children left destitute of a parent was again urged to her. She replied, “he that made them, would take care of them.” She was at last given to understand, she should not be permitted [L] to burn. This for a short space seemed to give her deep affliction; but soon recollecting herself she told them, “Death was in her own power, and that if she was not permitted to burn according to the principles of her cast, she would starve herself.” Her friends, finding her thus peremptory and resolved, were obliged at last to assent. The body of the deceased husband was carried down to the water-side early the following morning; the widow followed about ten o’clock, accompanied by three very principal Bramins, her children, parents and relations, and a numerous concourse of people. The order of leave for her burning did not arrive from Housseyn Khan, Fouzdaar of Morshadabad, till after one; and it was then brought by one of the Soubah’s own officers,

“fidelity to her vows, which might do honour to human nature in the most civilized countries.”—See Dissertation prefixt to Orme’s “Military Transactions in Indostan.”

N. B. All that is said by this writer on the burning of wives is the few following words. “The Bramins encourage wives to burn themselves with their deceased husbands.”

[κ] The wife of a Mutius Scævola could have done no more.—See Roman History.

[L] The Gentoos are not permitted to burn without an order from the Mahomedan government, and this permission is commonly made a perquisite of office.—HOLWELL.

“ who had orders to see, that she burned voluntarily. The time, they waited
“ for the order, was employed in praying with the Bramins and washing in
“ the Ganges; as soon as it arrived, she retired and staid for the space of half
“ an hour, in the midst of her female relations, among whom was her mother.
“ She then divested herself of her bracelets and other ornaments, and tied
“ them in a cloth, which hung like an apron before her, and was conducted
“ by her female relations to one corner of the pile. On the pile was an arched
“ arbour formed of dry sticks, boughs and leaves, open only at one end to
“ admit her entrance. In this the body of the deceased was deposited, his
“ head at the end opposite to the opening. At the corner of the pile to
“ which she had been conducted, the Bramin had made a small fire, round
“ which she and the three Bramins sat for some minutes; one of them gave
“ into her hand a leaf of the Bale-tree (the wood commonly consecrated to
“ form part of the funeral pile), with sundry things on it, which she threw
“ into the fire. One of the others gave her a second leaf, which she held
“ over the flame, whilst he dropped three times some ghee on it, which melted
“ and fell into the fire: these two operations were preparatory symbols of her
“ approaching dissolution by fire. While they were performing this, the
“ third Bramin read to her some portions of the Aughtorrah Bhade (a part of
“ the Shastah) and asked her some questions, to which she answered with a
“ steady and serene countenance; but the noise was so great, we could not
“ understand what she said, though we were within a yard of her. These
“ over, she was led with great solemnity three times round the pile, the
“ Bramins reading before her; when she came the third time to the
“ small fire, she stopped, took off all her rings and put them to her other
“ ornaments. Here she took a solemn, majestic leave of her children, pa-
“ rents and relations. After this, one of the Bramins dipped a large wick
“ of cotton in some ghee, and gave it ready lighted into her hand, and led
“ her to the open side of the arbour:—there, all the Bramins fell at her feet,
“ and after she had blessed them, they retired weeping. By two steps she
“ ascended the pile and entered the arbour. On her entrance she made a pro-
“ found reverence at the feet of the deceased, and advanced and seated herself
“ by his head. She looked in silent meditation on his face for the space of
“ a minute, then set fire to the arbour in three places; but observing that she
“ had set fire to leeward, and that the flames blew from her, she instantly rose
“ on

“ on seeing her error and set fire to windward and resumed her station. Ensign Daniel with his cane separated the grass and leaves on the windward side, by which means we had a distinct view of her as she sat. With what dignity and how undaunted a countenance she set fire to the pile the last time and resumed her seat, can only be conceived; for words cannot convey a just idea of her. The pile being of combustible matter, the supporters of the roof were presently consumed and it tumbled upon her.”—“ We have been present (says the same writer) at many of these sacrifices. In some of the victims we have observed a pitiable dread, tremor and reluctance that strongly spoke repentance for their declared [M] resolution; but it was now too late to retract or to retreat; Bistnou was waiting for the spirit. If the self-doomed victim discovers want of courage and fortitude, she is with gentle force obliged to ascend the pile, where she is held down with long poles by men on each side of the pile, till the flames reach her; her screams and cries in the mean time being drowned amid the deafening noise of loud music and the acclamations of the multitude. Others we have seen (as in the above instance) go through this fiery trial with most amazing calmness, resolution and joyous fortitude [N].”

Various

[M] The wife has twenty-four hours given her to determine (for there is no compulsion in the case); but if her resolution of burning be then declared, she cannot afterwards retract.

[N] “ Every one knows, that the Indian women sometimes demand to be burned with the corpse of their dead husbands. Travellers, both ancient and modern, generally astonished at the tranquillity of these women in this terrible moment, have presumed, that their faculties were stupified by a strong dose of opium. It is true of some, who have repented too late, but in vain, having inconsistently announced their resolution: but it is certain that drunkenness, constraint, or even the tears of the victim, destroy the merit of the sacrifice. Seduced by applause, by custom, and the hope of an happy futurity, a delicate and sensible female, sometimes almost in the state of infancy, will freely tear herself from every thing she holds most dear, to deliver herself to the flames and partake the fate of an inanimate corpse, which perhaps she detested living. In 1763 at Tanjour, one of these women, while she held the head of her late husband on her knee, perceived her only child, to whom she gave suck, and asked to kiss him once more. While she pressed him to her bosom, her heart began to melt; when ashamed of her weakness, she put him away, seized the fatal torch and set the pile on fire. No religious law or precept has ordained this barbarous sacrifice. They pretend it was originally without ostentation, inspired and perhaps authorised by love; and superstition or rather pride has since confirmed the rite. Though the Mahometan administration does not persecute any kind of worship, yet it forcibly forbids this atrocity. Permissions therefore are difficult to obtain, and only from those governors, who are wicked enough to sell them. Shall I dare avow it?—

“ European

Various are the opinions concerning the origin of this sacrifice, but all of them equally involved in obscurity and conjecture. Some Greek writers mention [o], "that the Indian women being betrothed very young, and not
 "with their own consent, frequently used the means of poison to rid them-
 "selves of a disagreeable partner; and that this secret destruction of the
 "husband having arisen to a formidable height, the expedient of burning the
 "wives, together with their deceased husbands, was adopted by law, as a
 "precaution, whereby to render the husband's life equally precious in the
 "estimation of the wife, as her own."

This account however is highly fabulous and affords no satisfaction to the rational inquirer; neither does Strabo himself give it much credit. Diodorus indeed seems more disposed to belief. He says further; "that the law excused
 "such wives as were pregnant or had children living; but that others, who
 "refused it, were to remain widows, and to be excommunicated from a par-

"European commanders have been known to receive the price of blood from these victims, and by
 "futile pretexes have endeavoured to divert the indignation of their own countrymen."——
 D'OBSONVILLE'S Philosophical Essays, &c. translated by Holcroft, 1784.

The following account was communicated to the author by a lady now living in England, but formerly resident in India. "That about twenty-three years ago, she went to see a woman burn herself
 "on her husband's funeral pile. This sacrifice of herself was made about 200 miles from Calcutta,
 "within ten miles of the Marad Bog. The funeral pile of wood was about ten feet high, and un-
 "derneath it was a hole or pit filled with combustibles. On the top of the pile on its back lay the
 "corpse of her deceased husband, covered with a white garment. The woman was brought forth
 "accompanied by a number of Bramins, and all her relations and friends surrounding her, and a great
 "number of instruments playing. She was dressed in the most costly manner, with a quantity of
 "jewels and other ornaments. She was brought in a carriage, and did not make her appearance,
 "till she came near to the pile; where leaving the carriage, she took leave of her relations without
 "any seeming discomposure or appearance of being at all affected, till she took her final leave of her
 "youngest child, seven or eight months old. Then after having laid aside her jewels and ornaments,
 "and distributed them among her relations, she with great eagerness mounted the ladder fixt before the
 "pile; and when she had reached the top, she strewed among the spectators, who were all desirous
 "of catching some of them, a great number of flowers, which had been before placed upon the pile in
 "baskets. Then making a speech of about five minutes length, she threw herself down upon the
 "corpse, which she embraced with great vehemence, and immediately the pile was set on fire, and
 "the people made a great shout, and all the instruments sounded, in order to drown her shrieks, while
 "consuming in the flames."

[o] See Strabo, Lib. XV. and Diod. Sic. Lib. XVII. and XIX.

"ticipation

“tipication of all sacred rites and legal possessions; that these marks of re-
 “probation stuck so fast by the women, that they soon eagerly and volunta-
 “rily demanded to be burned, and thought themselves stigmatized by a refusal,
 “though the law was restricted to the burning of one: that this avidity of
 “following the husband, and thus steering clear of all future reproach, gave
 “rise to the contest between the two wives of Ceteus,” &c. abovementioned.
 But this account of its origin is too full of absurdity to need refutation; neither
 is Diodorus’s statement of the laws of burning consistent with our present
 degree of information on that head; as in the instances lately noticed, the
 “Children” of the widows are expressly mentioned as attending their mother
 on this most solemn occasion. The case of pregnancy is indeed an exception,
 and that for a very obvious reason, because it is not allowed to sacrifice “two”
 lives on this occasion; the degree of stigma incurred by a refusal will appear
 hereafter.

Mr. Holwell says, “that the best account he was able to procure on the
 “spot, after much pains of investigation was the following. At the demise
 “of the mortal part of the great Gentoo-lawgiver and prophet Bramah, his
 “wives inconsolable for his loss, resolved not to survive; and accordingly offered
 “themselves voluntary victims on his funeral pile. The wives, of the chief
 “Rajabs, the first officers of state, being unwilling to have it thought that
 “they were deficient in fidelity and affection, followed the heroic example set
 “them by the wives of Bramah. The Bramans (a tribe then newly consti-
 “tuted by their great legislator) pronounced and declared “that the delinquent
 “spirits of these heroines, immediately ceased from their transmigrations and
 “entered the first or highest boboon of purification.” Hence it followed,
 “that “their” wives claimed a right of making the same sacrifice of their
 “mortal forms to God and the manes of their deceased husbands. The wives of
 “every Gentoo caught the enthusiastic (now pious) flame. Thus the heroic
 “acts of a few women brought about a general custom; the Bramans had
 “given it the stamp of religion; they foisted it into the Chatah and Aughtorrah
 “Bhades Shaftah, and instituted the forms and ceremonials that were to ac-
 “company the sacrifice. They strained some obscure passages of Bramah’s
 “Chatah Bhade, to countenance the declared sense of the action, and established
 “it as a religious tenet throughout Indostan, subject to the restrictions before
 “recited,

“ recited, which leaves it a voluntary act of glory, piety and fortitude. “ Whether the Bramans were sincere in their declared sense and consecration of “ this act, or had a view to the securing the fidelity of their own wives, or “ were actuated by any other motives, we will not determine.” Indeed all attempts at precisely ascertaining the origin of so ancient a custom must be deemed nugatory; some general ideas only can be entertained on the subject, and the following are submitted with deference to the reader’s judgment.

It is well known, that in the most ancient times and among nations not far emerged out of the clouds of ignorance and barbarism, very confused notions prevailed (but still there were some) of an existence after death. As these notions were not very spiritualized, it was no wonder, that the ideas entertained of a future stage of existence, should entirely correspond with those of their present lives; and that these very ignorant and unenlightened people could have no more exalted conceptions of futurity, than as a state, in which they were to enjoy every delight of their heart on earth in an enlarged degree and an uninterrupted fruition. It was therefore very natural to conceive, that what had contributed highly to their gratifications on earth, must do the same in their future existence. From hence a general custom arose among all unenlightened nations, (and the same is still to be found among those, who continue in their ignorance and darkness) of not suffering their friends to go into the other world unaccompanied with whatever was necessary for their comfortable or pleasurable subsistence in this: hence the furnishing of their deceased friend with provisions, clothes and arms, as well as animals of various sorts [P] for his

[P] Go, like the Indian, in another life,
Expect thy dog, thy bottle and thy wife. — Pope.

Lo the poor Indian! whose untutor’d mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;
His soul proud science never taught to stray,
Far as the solar walk or milky way;
Yet simple nature to his hope has given
Behind the cloud-topp’d hill an humbler Heaven;
Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
Some happier island in the watry waste;
Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.

his better accommodation in his new station. But the idea was carried further on the same principle; and it was conceived, that those friends, those relations and domestics, who had been best beloved by the deceased party, and most useful to him on earth, would also be able to continue their services and to contribute to his happiness in [Q] his new life. Hence followed a desire and readiness on most occasions in beloved wives, in favourite slaves, voluntarily to deprive themselves of that life, which was now become useless here, by the demise of their lord, but which might continue to be serviceable to him, where he was gone. Where this was not done voluntarily, it was generally required and executed by the customs of the country; and thus it naturally became a matter of shame and reproach, not to be willing to pay this last tribute of respect and duty. From hence then a very fair and probable origin may be traced of an immolation of wives to the manes of their husbands;—an immolation partly voluntary and partly forced; in which a diversity of rites and customs were observed according to the different sentiments and religious usages of the nations, among whom it prevailed. The Indian sacrifice on these occasions was much circumscribed to what it was in other nations; being confined to one wife and unaccompanied with any thing else. This was owing to their doctrine of the metempsychosis, which takes away the idea of having the same pursuits and passions in the next stage of existence. In India it was considered as a matter of religion, and rather for the benefit of the woman burning than to be of any use to the deceased. But whether these practices

To be, contents his natural desire,
He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.—POPE.

[Q.] The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, falsely understood, has almost throughout all nations and in every age, engaged women, slaves, subjects, friends, to murder themselves; that they might go and serve in the other world the object of their respect and love in this. Thus it was in the West-Indies and among the Danes; and thus it is at present in Japan, in Macassar, and many other places. These customs do not so directly proceed from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, as from that of the resurrection of the body; from whence they have drawn this consequence, that after death the same individual will have the same wants, the same sentiments, the same passions. In this point of view, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has a prodigious effect on mankind, because the idea of only a simple change of habitation is more within the reach of the human understanding, and more adapted to flatter the heart, than the idea of a new modification.”——MONTESQUIEU, Spirit of Laws, Vol. II. B. xxiv. c. xix.

first took their rise in India and were diffused from thence; or whether they were copied by the Indians [R] from other nations, is equally immaterial and difficult to determine at this distance of time: as it is also, at what period the practice of wives burning in India might commence. However it is pretty clear, that such a practice could not have prevailed before the Indians had lost sight of the purity of their ancient faith and doctrines; and had fallen much from their fame for wisdom and knowledge; or at least till their Bramans used that knowledge to the purposes of gaining an undue influence and power over the minds of the vulgar. The first actual example recorded (or at least that has fallen within the author's knowledge) of a wife burning in India, is that of the wife of Ceteus abovementioned, in the age succeeding Alexander's, or about two thousand years ago; but then it is declared at that time to have been done according to a very ancient custom or law of that country. Instead therefore of involving ourselves in fruitless researches, as to its [s] origin and antiquity, let us rather proceed to develope (as far as we are able) the laws attending its usage.

In the year 1773 a number of learned Bramins met at Fort William in Bengal, at the request and by the encouragement of Governor Hastings, to compile a code of what they could collect of their ancient laws. This they completed in the year 1775, and translated it from the original Shanfcrit into the Persian language. Mr. Halhed was then employed by the Governor General, to translate from the Persian, and the work was completed and printed in London in the year 1777, under the title of "A Code of Gentoo Laws or Ordinations of the Pundits [R]." The antiquity of these laws is immense and not to be ascertained. In Chap. xx. title, "Of what concerns Women," the passage relative to burning is as follows. "It is proper for a woman after her husband's death to burn herself in the fire with his corpse. Every woman, who thus burns, shall remain in Paradise with her husband three crore and fifty

[R] See for some extracts concerning the practice in other nations in a note at the end of this chapter.

[s] Mr. Halhed says (in his preface to "Code of Gentoo Laws") "that the Bramins seem to look upon this sacrifice, as one of the first principles of their religion, the cause of which it would hardly be orthodox to investigate."

[T] Pundits are Gentoo lawyers or learned Bramins, who alone understand the Shanfcrit language.

" lacks

“ lacks of years, by destiny. If she cannot burn, she must in that case pre-
 “ serve an inviolable chastity: if she remains always chaste, she goes to Paradise;
 “ and if she does not preserve her chastity, she goes to Hell.” This then seems
 an original law, by which the matter of burning appears to be neither abso-
 lutely compulsory, nor yet entirely optional. “ It is proper;” that is, it is
 a fit and becoming action; to the performance of which a great reward is
 annexed. But if female weakness and timidity prevails over resolution, so
 that a woman cannot burn, it is not a matter to be passed over in silence;
 since she must then perform another condition in order to be entitled to future
 happiness;—“ she must preserve an inviolable chastity.” This seems the only
 condition, which was to accompany a refusal; and which if performed, the
 woman was to suffer no degradation or diminution of character. But in process
 of time a variety of circumstances have been ingrafted on the simplicity [u] of
 this ancient law. It has been determined, that a pregnant woman cannot burn,
 she having no right to involve her child’s death with her own; also that if the
 husband die at a considerable distance from his wife, she is not to burn, unless
 she can procure some parts of his clothing, such as his turban or girdle, to
 wear on the pile; that the first choice belongs to the first wife, (for the Indians
 allow polygamy) upon whose refusal only it devolves to the second; that the
 answer is to be given in twenty-four hours, but not sooner; that no advantage
 may be taken of the very first impressions of grief; and when once given, be
 it either way, it cannot be retracted. Sometimes the first wife refuses and the
 second burns; at others they both refuse, and the worst consequence attending
 the refusal now-a-days is, lying under an imputation and reproach of being wanting
 to their own honour and purification, and of not promoting the prosperity of their
 family. It often happens, that if the first wife be childless and the second have
 children, the latter puts in her claim of burning in preference to the former,
 that she may have this opportunity of aggrandizing her children; since the
 truth is, that the children in this case are deemed more illustrious, are sought
 in marriage by the more opulent and honourable of their “ cast,” and stand a
 better chance of being received into one of a superior dignity. It is very
 certain, that the household Bramins take the utmost pains to instil into the
 minds of females, (for what causes are best known to themselves) the highest

[u] See Holwell and Halhed in their works aforementioned, as authorities for the assertions that follow.

ideas of the glory and honour of this voluntary sacrifice; that they instruct them eagerly to embrace such an opportunity of dying, as a peculiar blessing, which will place them immediately in the highest boboon or sphere of purification without passing through the intermediate [x] ones. Thus worked up by their priests from earliest infancy to an enthusiastic notion of a death so advantageous and honourable to themselves and families, it is no wonder, that so many Indian women have in all ages, (and continue so to do at this day) eagerly coveted and heroically undergone this fiery trial. A Christian martyr cannot have more reliance on his faith and on his God, when he undergoes an "involuntary" burning for the same, than an Indian wife has confidence in that principle of her sect, which encourages her voluntarily to seek this violent and painful death. Superstition and enthusiasm in more enlightened countries will go great lengths, even to the surrender of life itself, when buoyed up by any system of early education, popular prejudice, or religious enthusiasm. Let not then the European lady, who perchance thinks it possible to "survive" her deceased husband, pass too hasty a condemnation on the conduct of her Gentoo-sister, only because the latter is anxious to make her practice coincide with her principles [y].

[x] "The Bramins assign fourteen (Holwell says fifteen) bhoobuns or spheres; seven below and six above the earth (which is one itself). The seven below are inhabited by a variety of serpents; the six above are so many Paradises for the reception of those, who merit a removal from the lower earth. The highest or most exalted of these spheres is called "Suttee," and is the residence of Brihma and his particular favourites. This is the place of destination for those men, who have never uttered a falsehood during their lives, and for those women, who have voluntarily burned themselves with their husbands."—HALHED's Preface to Code of Gentoo Laws.

[y] The following extracts may not prove unentertaining to the reader, as well as serve to ascertain the fact of wives, friends, slaves, &c. burning, or otherwise sacrificing their lives at the decease of their lord, in many other countries as well as in India.

"When their king dies (speaking of Scythians, who lived between the Danube and the Palus Mæotis) they embalm his body and wrap it in wax. It is then put into an open chariot and carried from city to city, exposed to the view of all people. The circuit being finished, a place is appointed for the burial, and a large grave is made; in which the body of the king is interred, and with it "one of his wives," and all his chief officers of state, who are put to death for that purpose. To these are added several horses, a number of drinking vessels, and the images of the household gods and the furniture belonging to the deceased monarch."—See HERODOTUS, Book IV.

"The Crestonei (a Thracian nation) have many wives. When the husband dies there is a great contention among the wives, joined by their particular friends, which was the favourite wife. She, who

who is judged so, being arrayed and adorned by the men and women, is slain at his grave by her nearest relations and is buried with him; the other wives deeming it a great calamity to be deprived of this honour."—See HERODOTUS, Book V.

See for examples of Scandinavian wives burning themselves or burying themselves with their husbands, Bartholinus De Causis contemptæ a Danis adhuc Gentilibus mortis, Lib. II. c. x.

"Pleni sunt Historicorum libri, varias apud nationes, uxores maritis superfites simul cum defunctis crematas, vel super corpora eorum interfectas. De Thracibus testatur Herodotus, & ex eo Mela, quem Solinus sequitur. De Herulis Procopius. De Polonis adhuc Gentilibus Ditmarus, "Unaquæque mulier post viri exequias sui igne cremati decollata subsequitur." De Prussis indicat Hartknochius. De Winedis (aut Widenis prope Danubium) Bonifacius Episcopus Moguntinus; "Winedi tam magno zelo matrimonii amorem mutuum servant, ut mulier viro proprio mortuo, vivere recuset; & laudabilis mulier inter illas esse judicatur, quæ propriâ manu sibi mortem intulit, ut in unâ strue pariter ardeat cum viro suo."—BARTHOLINUS, Lib. II. c. x.

"I must observe in the first place, that it is the custom of the Tartars, when one of them dies, that one of his wives must hang herself to bear him company in his journey. In the year 1668, a Tartar of note died in the imperial city; and a concubine of seventeen years of age was to bear him company. She was well born and had good relations. Her kindred were much troubled to lose her, and without doubt she was more concerned herself. They presented a petition to the emperor, begging of him, that he would dispense with that custom received and established among his nation. The emperor did it to the purpose; for he commanded that custom should be no longer in force, so that it was quite abolished and abrogated. The Chinese have the same custom; but it is not common or approved or received by their philosopher. In our time the viceroy of Canton died. Some said he poisoned himself. Being near his death, he called the concubine he loved best, and putting her in mind of the love he had borne her, desired she would bear him company. She gave him a promise, and as soon as he died, she hanged herself."—CHURCHILL'S Folio Collection of Voyages, Vol. I. B. II. c. viii. Account of China.

The following extract from Muller's Travels through Siberia is to be found in Coxe's Travels, Vol. II. p. 125. "After describing the different species of tombs observed in the southern parts of Siberia, Muller adds, "That as in several of these burial-places, the bones of men, women and horses have been found with javelins, bows and arrows and other weapons; it seems evident, that the same ancient superstition, which still reigns in India, was formerly prevalent in those parts; viz. "that the departed souls follow the same kind of life in a future state, which they pursued in this world." (Or as the poet has elegantly expressed himself, says Mr. Coxe in a note,

quæ gratiâ currûm
Atmorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes
Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repôstos.—Æn. VI.)

"For this purpose (Muller proceeds) at the demise of a person of distinction, his favourite wife, his servants, the horses on which he was accustomed to ride, were sacrificed at his tomb and buried with him; and for the same reason his arms, dress, and other accoutrements were also interred."

And

And Mr. Muller further observes; "that upon inspecting the ancient archives of Yakutsk, the same custom obtained among the inhabitants, when the Russians first made the conquest of those parts; and that the only effectual method of putting a stop to such proceedings was by punishing all those as murderers, who sacrificed the wives and servants of the deceased."

"Among the Natchez, formerly a powerful tribe in America, but now extinct (having been extirpated by the Europeans) their great Chief was looked on as a being of a superior order, and as a brother of the Sun. When he died, his principal officers, favourite wives, and many of his domestics of inferior rank, were sacrificed at his tomb, that he might be attended in the next world by the same persons as in this. The Chief was held in such reverence, that those victims welcomed death with exultation, deeming it a recompence of fidelity and a mark of distinction, when thus chosen to accompany their deceased lord. This custom of the Natchez was unquestionably as inhuman, as that of the Hindoos; but then it extended not to inferior persons; excepting indeed that the husbands of the daughters of the Sun were in like manner to be offered up at the graves of their heavenly-defended wives."—SULLIVAN'S Phil. Rhap. Vol. II. III.

"By the account, which M. Dumont, an eye-witness, gives of the funeral of the great Chief of the Natchez it appears, that the feelings of the persons, who suffered on that occasion, were very different. Some solicited the honour with eagerness; others laboured to avoid their doom, and several saved their lives by flying to the woods. As the Indian Bramins give an intoxicating draught to the women, who are to be burned together with the bodies of their husbands, which renders them insensible of their approaching fate, the Natchez obliged their victims to swallow several large pills of tobacco, which produce a similar effect."—ROBERTSON'S Hist. of America, Vol. I. B. iv.

"The Mexicans bury great quantities of gold and silver with their dead, to bear the expences of their journey, which they believe to be both long and troublesome. They put to death some of their servants to accompany them; and it is a common thing for wives to celebrate the exequies of their husbands with their own deaths."—Hist. of Conquest of Mexico, translated from the Spanish of Don Antonio de Solis, by Thomas Townsend, Esq. Folio. 1724.

"As they imagine the dead begin their career anew in the world, whither they are gone, that they may not enter on it defenceless and unprovided, they bury with them their bow, their arrows, and other weapons used in hunting or war; they deposit in their tombs the skins and stuffs, of which they make garments, Indian corn, venison, domestic utensils, and all other necessaries. In some provinces upon the decease of a Cazique or Chief, a certain number of his wives, of his favourites and of his slaves, were put to death and interred together with him, that he might appear with the same dignity in his future station and be waited upon by the same attendants. This persuasion is so deep rooted, that many of their retainers offer themselves as voluntary victims, and court the privilege of accompanying their departed master, as an high distinction. It has been found difficult on some occasions to set bounds to their enthusiasm of affectionate duty, and to reduce the train of a favourite leader to such a number, as the Tribe could afford."—ROBERTSON'S Hist. of America, Vol. I. B. iv.

"However superstitious the Mexicans were in other matters, in the rites, which they observed at funerals they exceeded themselves. They dressed the dead body in a habit suitable to the rank, the wealth and the circumstances attending the death of the party; with the habit they gave the dead a

jug of water, which was to serve on the journey to the other world, and also different pieces of paper, which were to be used as charms or passports, to enable them to pass through all difficulties on the road. But one of the chief and most ridiculous ceremonies at funerals was the killing a Tethichi, a domestic quadruped, resembling a little dog, to accompany the deceased in their journey to the other world. They fixed a string about its neck, believing that necessary to enable it to pass the deep waters. Such were the funeral rites of the common people. Those of their kings and great lords were attended with an abundance of ceremonies, ("see them described at large ad locum") of which the following are a few. Great presents of rich dresses, beautiful feathers and slaves were amassed together; the corpse was dressed in the richest manner, and adorned with gold, jewels, &c. with a variety of habits heaped one over the other. The slave was then sacrificed, who had had the superintendence of the deceased's family or private worship, that he might be ready to serve him in the same capacity in the other world. The funeral procession then commenced in great state, and the body was placed on a large odoriferous pile of wood. While the royal corpse and all its habits, arms and ensigns were burning, a number of slaves, both of those belonging to his household and those presented on this occasion by others, were sacrificed in an area below. Along with the slaves were sacrificed some of the irregularly-formed men, whom the king had collected for his entertainment, that they might afford him the same amusement in the other world; and for the same reason, they used also to sacrifice some of his wives. The number of victims was proportioned to the grandeur of the funeral, and amounted sometimes, as several historians affirm, to two hundred. Among the other sacrifices the Tethichi was not omitted; they were firmly persuaded, that without such a guide it would be impossible to get through some dangerous ways, which led to the other world."—From the first Vol. of the Abbé Clavigero's Italian Hist. of Mexico, translated by Charles Cullen, Esq. 1787.

Though Homer goes not so far as wives (they indeed were all left at home) yet he makes Achilles sacrifice captive-slaves and animals at Patroclus's funeral, beside sheep and oxen as common victims.

Four sprightly couriers with a deadly groan
 Pour forth their lives, and on the pyre are thrown.
 Of nine large dogs, domestic at his board,
 Fall two, selected to attend their lord.
 Then last of all (* and horrible to tell,
 Sad sacrifice!) twelve Trojan captives fell.
 On these the rage of fire victorious preys,
 Involves and joins them in one common blaze.—POPE'S Homer, B. XXIII.

And Virgil follows in the same track. *

—————Sulmone creatos
 Quatuor hic juvenes, totidem quos educat Ufens
 Videntes rapit: inferias quos immolat umbris
 Captivoque rogi perfundat sanguine flammæ.—ÆN. X.

However in both these cases the immolations were of captives taken in war. The Romans had their fights of gladiators at funerals.

* This reflection is Pope's, not Homer's.

The following extracts concern the funeral rites of the African savages at this day, as related in "Religious Ceremonies of all Nations." Folio.

"Provisions, &c. are put into the graves of the deceased, to support them in their supposed journey. When the king dies, his wives poison themselves the moment he expires, in order to die with and wait on him in his progress to the other world. A numerous retinue of grandees are also selected for the same purpose."—Religion, &c. of Inhabitants of Agag in Africa.

"When the negroes of Senegal inter their dead, they bury with them all the implements and utensils they made use of when living, and afterwards close their graves.—The natives of Gambia bury their dead with all their gold and valuable treasures, and he, who has the richest grave, is in their opinion the happiest man.—When the King of Guinella dies, his funeral is pompous; all his wives, most faithful friends and domestics, and even his favourite horse, are sacrificed at the grave, in order to attend him to the other world.—The natives of Benin and Soufos bring presents for the deceased, which are buried with his body. Their kings and grandees are buried in private places or in the deepest rivers, that no one may be able to purloin the treasures buried with them."—Religion of Nigritia or Nigeria in Africa.

"They furnish the deceased with a bow and arrow, and adorn him with all the gayest things he was possessed of in his life-time, and then make him suitable presents: all which they bury with him. If a prince or great man dies, they bury a sufficient quantity of slaves with him to attend him in the other world.—In the more remote parts of Guinea, they impale a youth alive in an hollow tree, in order to attend upon a deceased hero or commander in another world. Such as die at Benin are always accompanied by a number of slaves. The courtiers of the king are ambitious of attending him on this occasion; but that honour is reserved for his peculiar favourites, who are buried along with him."—Religion of Inhabitants of Benin, Ardra, &c. in Africa.

"The natives of Lovango inter with their dead a considerable part of their effects, valuable presents and goods. At the decease of a grandee in Lovango and Congo, beside costly presents and foreign commodities, he is furnished with domestics and young women to attend him on his journey; and there are rivals, who strenuously contest for the honour of being buried alive on this occasion.—The common people are furnished with a bow and arrows, a drinking cup, a wooden platter, and pipes and tobacco for smoking."—Religion of Congo, Angola, &c.

C H A P. II.

Reasons of the strict adherence of the Gentoos to their native customs.—Their customs have been similar to what they are at present for two thousand years at least; probably much longer.—Burning of wives not gone into desuetude, but only rendered more difficult, as being opposed by both Christian and Turk.—An enthusiastic zeal for old customs is a grand characteristic of the Gentoos-Tribes.—Their contempt of life gives rise to frequent suicide, particularly of a religious kind.—Account of Gentoos-School of Bramins now flourishing at Banaris on the banks of the Ganges.—Self-sacrifice of the Gentoos under the chariot wheels of their idol Jaggernaut.—Suicide in honour of a chief Bramin.—The aged and infirm among Gentoos brought down at their own desire to perish on the banks of the Ganges; a sacred river.—A Gentoos sacrifices himself in order to stop a contagious disorder in his family.—Suicide among the Siamese.—The Japanese remarkably prone to suicide, both on religious and secular accounts: are full of its praises to their children.—Favourable notions of suicide prevailed among all the Scythian Tribes; who thought it honourable and advantageous to kill themselves under infirmities or in old age.—Reasons why suicide in old age or under bodily infirmities should be particularly countenanced among warlike nations.—Whence the idea sprang of such longevity among Northern nations, as to make them tired of living, and for that reason alone, destroy themselves.—Suicide among the worshippers of Odin in Scandinavia, a branch of Scythian adventurers.—War and carnage the delight of the Scandinavians.—Odin's chief title, "Father of Slaughter."—The first wish of the worshippers of Odin, to die in battle; the next, by some violent death.—A peaceful death excluded from Odin's feast of heroes in Asgardia.—Valhalla or the Hall of Odin, for the reception of those, who died a violent death of any sort.—The public self-murder of Odin.—Hence much religious suicide among his followers, as being promised great rewards.—Account of Valhalla and who were admitted into it; those, who fell in battle, and those who killed themselves, either to avoid dying on a bed, or to accompany their deceased lord; as wives, friends, slaves, &c.—Sole purpose of Asiatic suicide (of which the Scandinavian was a branch) to promote

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a supposed happiness in future; not (like European) to be a relief from present misery.—Not to be harsh in our judgment of Asiatic suicide, because of its consistency in principle and practice.

IT may be asked, “is it not wonderful, that, in such a course of ages, and “especially since there has been a mixture of so many different nations “among the Gentoos, so unnatural and horrid a custom as the burning of “wives should not have grown into total disuse?” Some peculiar causes however may be assigned for the strict adherence of the Gentoos to their native customs. The inhabitants of hot climates are known to be endued with an extreme degree [z] of sensibility; from whence every object and every custom makes a deep impression upon them. This sensibility also, through the heat and regularity of the climate is accompanied with a corresponding indolence [A] and

[z] “Nature having framed the Indians of a texture so weak, as to render them timid, has formed them at the same time of an imagination so lively, that every object makes the strongest impressions upon them. The delicacy of organs, which renders them apprehensive of death, contributes likewise to make them dread a thousand things worse than death. The very same sensibility makes them fly and dare all dangers.”—MONTESQUIEU, Spirit of Laws, B. XIV. c. iii.

[A] “An abhorrence of the shedding of blood derived from his religion, and seconded by the great temperance of a life, which is passed by most of them in a very sparing use of animal food and a total abstinence from intoxicating liquors, the influence of the most regular of climates, in which the great heat of the sun and the great fertility of the soil, lessen most of the wants to which the human species is subject in austerer regions, and supply the rest without the exertion of much labour; these causes, with various derivations and consequences from them, have all together contributed to render the Indian the most enervated inhabitant of the globe. He shudders at the sight of blood, and is of a pusillanimity only to be excused and accounted for by the great delicacy of his configuration. This is so slight as to give him no chance of opposing with success the onset of an inhabitant of more northern regions. But in a country of such extent, divided into so many distinct sovereignties, it cannot be expected, that there should be no exceptions to one general assertion of the character of the inhabitants. There is every where in the mountains a wild inhabitant, whose bow an European can scarcely draw. There are in the woods people who subsist by their incursions into the neighbouring plains, and who, without the ferocity of the American, possess all his treachery; and according to Mr. Thevenot, India has had its cannibals in the center of one of the most cultivated provinces of the empire. The Rajpouts by their courage have preserved themselves almost independent of the Great Mogul. The inhabitants of the countries still nearer to the mountains of the frontier, distinguished by the activity of their character from the indolence of the rest of the nation, have easily turned Mahommedans, and these “Affghans” are the best troops in the emperor’s service, and the most dangerous enemies of the throne, when in arms against it.”—See Dissertation prefixt to Military Transactions in Indostan. Printed in 1763.

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and inactivity of temper, which prevents the desire, as well as the exertion, necessary to effect any great change of manners or customs. The customs of the Indians (and especially that before us) make a part of their religion, with which they are so mixt and interwoven, that the one cannot undergo any alteration, without infringing on the other; and there is scarce any the most common action left indifferent and not regulated by some religious observance. To which it may be added (not indeed much to the credit of European adventurers) that the native tribes of Indians cannot have had much relish for altering their own customs and laws, from what they have "seen" of the behaviour and "felt" from the rapacity of too many of their "Christian" visitors. Even the different "Casts" among themselves bear no good will towards each other or are willing to adopt each others' [B] customs: it can therefore scarce be imagined, that strangers, of whose principles and customs they have no small abhorrence, and who differ so widely from them in every essential, can

"The country of the Morattoes lies between Bombay and Gol-Kondah; its limits are not known with any degree of precision to Europeans, and we are equally ignorant of the origin and history of the people. They have now figured for near a century, as the most enterprising foldiers of Indostan, and as the only nation of Indians, which seems to make war an occupation by choice: for the Rajpouts are foldiers by birth. They often let out bodies of men and sometimes whole armies. But notwithstanding their warlike character, they are in other respects the most scrupulous observers of the religion of Brama; never eating any thing that has life, nor even killing the insects which molest them; however a buffalo sacrificed with many strange ceremonies atones for the blood of their own species, which they shed in war."—History of Military Transactions, &c. B. I. p. 40.

[B] "The Casts or Tribes into which the Indians are divided, are reckoned by travellers to be eighty-four. Perhaps when India shall be better known, we shall find them to be many more. For there is a singular disposition in the Indians, from very trifling circumstances, to form a sect apart from the rest of their neighbours. But the order of pre-eminence of all the casts in a particular city or province is generally indisputably decided. The Indian of an inferior cast would think himself honoured by adopting the customs of a superior cast; but this would give battle sooner than not vindicate its prerogatives: the inferior receives the victuals prepared by a superior cast with respect; but the superior will not partake of a meal, which has been prepared by the hands of an inferior cast. Their marriages are circumscribed by the same barriers, as the rest of their intercourses; and hence, besides the national physiognomy, the members of each cast preserve an air of still greater resemblance to one another. There are some casts remarkable for their beauty, others as remarkable for their ugliness."—Dissertation prefixed to Military Transactions, &c.

Any deviations from the established rules of their cast renders them polluted; subjects them to be rejected by their tribe, to be degraded, and to be obliged to herd with the Hallachores, who are the refuse and outcast of all the other tribes and equally detested and disowned by them all.

have any influence over them; or rather that they will not be more firmly rivetted to their own practices, in opposition to the manners of (what is too often the case) their cruel masters and plunderers [c].

The accounts of Indian manners, that are to be met with in ancient writers, are so very similar to those of modern travellers and merchants, that there can be no doubt, but the same religious tenets are maintained and the same superstitions prevail among the natives of the East, as did above two thousand years ago [d]; that the women frequently burn with their husbands, and that suicide is in many cases esteemed highly honourable. The burning of the women is indeed become somewhat more difficult to be accomplished (which has made some ready to assert, that it has grown much into disuse) on account of the necessary leave to be obtained from the Mahometan governors [e]; but this is

[c] "His religion forbids the Indian to quit his own shores; he wants nothing from abroad; he is so far from being solicitous to convert a stranger to his own opinion, or from wishing him to assimilate with the nation, that if a foreigner were to solicit the privilege of worshipping Vishnu, his proposal would be received with the utmost contempt."—*Dissertation to Military Transactions, &c.*

"By the fundamental doctrines and laws of the Gentoos, they cannot admit of proselytes or converts to their faith and worship, or receive them into the pale of their communion, without the loss of their cast or tribe; a disgrace, which every Gentoos would rather suffer death than incur: and though this religious prohibition in its consequences reduced the people to a slavish dependence on their Bramins, yet it proved the cement of their union as a nation; which to this day remains unmixed with any other race of people."—*HOLWELL, Vol. I. Part II.*

Since such is the "excluding" bigotry of the Gentoos, it is hardly probable they will submit to a strange faith themselves.

[d] This we know from the account of Calanus and of Ceteus's wife. Mr. Holwell says, "that the Aughtorrah-Bhade-Shaftah, whose corruptions are ingrafted on the original Chatah-Bhade-Shaftah of Bramah, has been invariably followed by the Gentoos inhabiting from the mouth of the Ganges to the Indus, for the last 3363 years; and that these innovations were made 1500 years after the first promulgation of the Shaftah by Bramah. That the institutions of the Aughtorrah-Bhade were so numerous and the ceremonies so intricate, that every family was compelled to have an household priest to direct him; from whence followed an uncontrolled power of the Bramins: that many not liking the Aughtorrah-Bhade produced the Viedam, as a better explanation of the Chatah-Bhade, but itself in reality much fuller of absurdities."

[e] "This leave however is said to be often denied only to enhance its "price;" and that the reason of the disuse of the custom is chiefly owing to a permission's being "too costly" for any but the rich to obtain. This obstacle makes the inclination sometimes the stronger. Some women have

is frequently denied, as both they and the Christians join in discountenancing the horrid practice. But their endeavours often prove ineffectual; since those women, who have been refused leave to burn, have been known to bury themselves alive with their husbands, to dash their heads against a wall, till their brains gushed out, to poison, starve or otherwise destroy themselves privately, when forbidden to exhibit a public proof [F] of their fortitude.

But a vigorous and steady attachment to their religious principles [G], or rather an enthusiastic zeal for their maintenance, is one great characteristic of the Gentoo nation. Witness their starving with so much resolution in the midst of plenty of other food (of the animal kind) proffered to them by Europeans, whenever there is a scarcity or general failure of "rice," their staple and religious [H] nourishment. While these prejudices remain, there is little

have been known to devote themselves for several years to the lowest and most laborious employments, in order to raise money to defray the expences of this extravagant suicide. Others have been more eagerly ambitious of sacrificing themselves in proportion as these scenes became less common."——
RAYNAL'S Hist. of East and West Indies, Vol. I.

[F] See the threats of Rhaam Chund's widow related above; and also Sullivan's Philosophical Rhapsodies, Vol. II. 103.

[G] "Some of the English officers examining the different buildings of the fort, which they had stormed, found in one of the chambers a Tanjorine lying on the ground desperately wounded; whom incapable of moving without assistance, the garrison in their precipitate flight had neglected to carry off, though he was an officer of rank, and an Indian of a very high cast. He was taken care of, but with a sullen obstinacy refused every kind of assistance, and would not submit to the necessary operations, till he found that the surgeon intended to use force. He was no sooner left alone than he stripped off the bandages, and attempted to put an end to his life, by tearing open his wounds. Some persons were therefore appointed to watch him continually, and he was removed into a thatched hut in a distant part of the fort, that his rest might not be disturbed by the business necessary to be carried on near the chamber, where he was first discovered. Finding himself constantly watched, he behaved for three days with so much composure, that they, to whose care he was entrusted, thought he was reconciled to life, and relaxing their attention, left him in the night, as they imagined, asleep. But they were no sooner got to some distance, than the Tanjorine crept to the corner of the hut, where a lamp was burning, and with it he set fire to the thatch, which in that dry season of the year caught the blaze so fiercely, that he was suffocated before it could be extinguished. "This Indian fell a martyr to his ideas of the impurity he had contracted by suffering Europeans to administer to his wants."——
Hist. of Military Transactions in Indostan, B. II. p. 120.

[H] "It is of singular consideration, that the same principle, which actuates them to a contempt of death, as relative to themselves, should at the same time, from the belief that they are to occupy the

little probability of any innovations being made in their ancient customs. Indeed that great contempt of life, which universally prevails through the natives of the East, gives rise to frequent suicide in various shapes; though it seems chiefly to be of an enthusiastic or religious nature; and accordingly we find self-murder not only committed, but much inculcated and highly applauded, among the Heathen countries of Asia. In Banaris, where there is a kind of Gentoo university, on the banks of the Ganges, much celebrated for the sanctity of its members, there still subsists a school of ancient Bramins or Gymnosophists, who study the Sanscrit or sacred language, which is esteemed the most ancient of the East. They likewise declare, (but only to their initiated) that idols are introduced only to catch the attention of the vulgar by visible forms, being only different emblems of one supreme Deity. They however lead the common people for various reasons to pay the highest acts of adoration to these grotesque figures [1], and inculcate the distinguished honour of even sacrificing their lives before the images of their divinities. In consequence of this, many a religious enthusiast on certain festivals prostrates himself in the dust at the approach of the idol [κ] Jaggernaut, and with extended arms supplicates the horrid

the bodies of other animals, occasion their greatest abhorrence of shedding the blood of any other creature, "lest they should kill a departed friend." Thousands and ten thousands of the more rigid ones will perish rather than partake of food, which once had existence in it; though at the same time, as is instanced in the Mahrattahs, they will plunder and lay desolate countries, and will murder and destroy their enemies with the most heartfelt alacrity and satisfaction. It is not unusual to see hospitals erected for the admission of diseased animals and birds. "I have seen many camels, horses and bullocks (says Thevenot) with other wounded animals, which the Hindoos had purchased from Christians and Mohammedans, and which they had delivered, as they were wont to say, from the cruelty of infidels."—SULLIVAN'S Phil. Rhap. Vol. II.

[1] Many sects of Gentoos inflict the most cruel tortures on their own bodies, and devote themselves to death with extraordinary torment, in honour of their religion and laws. Witness the Banians and others.

[κ] See Holwell in his Account of Gentoo Fasts and Festivals. Also Voltaire's State of Nations (from Tavernier) and Collier's General Dictionary at the word Narfinga, now Bistnager, and the authors he quotes.

N. B. Jaggernaut is the same with Bistnou or Vistnou. His chief temple is said to be in the province of Orixia in the Carnatic, and to be attended by five hundred priests. The image, which is carried about in annual procession, is an irregular pyramidal black stone, of about four or five hundred weight, with two rich diamonds near the top to represent eyes; and the nose and mouth painted with vermilion.

"Quilacara,

horrid image, "that he will be pleased to suffer him to be crushed in pieces " under the wheels of his chariot." If any one happens to be thus killed, his body is burnt, and his ashes are preserved as holy relics. But this profound adoration of their idols, even to becoming suicides for their imagined honour and glory, is by an easy transition through the medium of religious influence and superstition, made to pass from the idol to his chief priest or minister. For Tavernier relates (as he is quoted by Voltaire) " that he was himself a " witness at Agra, one of the capitals of India, that when a certain great " Bramin died, a merchant, who had long been his disciple and studied under " him, came to the Dutch factory in order to settle his accounts, as being " resolved to follow his great master into the other world; and accordingly he " starved himself to death in spite of all remonstrance to the contrary." The old doctrine also of the Bramans, which forbids their followers to wait patiently for death in their old age and infirmities, but rather to anticipate its stroke by a voluntary exit, is still kept up by the modern Gentoos; among whom the aged and infirm are frequently brought down at their own request to the banks of rivers, and particularly to the Ganges, which is esteemed a sacred water, and in whose current they deem it an act of religion, as well as conducive to their future happiness, thus voluntarily [L] to perish. It is also asserted to be
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" Quilacara, a celebrated town on the borders of the Indies, is remarkable for a jubilee celebrated there once in twelve years. On the morning of the festival the Raja of the place, who is both sovereign and high priest, mounts a scaffold, and having stripped himself naked, is washed all over by his attendants. He then makes an oration to the people, telling them, that he is to offer up himself a free-will offering to the gods. The people shout applause, when the Raja pulls out a sharp knife, and cutting off pieces of his flesh, presents them to his idols, and closes the ceremony by cutting his throat. Horrid as this ceremony may appear to us, yet there are others more barbarous still and in the same province. Some of their devotees go in scores together to visit the most celebrated temples; and standing before their altars, they cut off their flesh by piece-meal, using the following words, " Thus do I mortify myself for the sake of my god." When they can endure the torment no longer, they say " Out of love to thee, O my god, do I offer up myself a cheerful sacrifice." Then they stab themselves, and their bodies are immediately reduced to ashes. These precious ashes are sold by the priests for a considerable sum to the deluded people, and are considered as preservatives against all sorts of diseases."—See Religious Ceremonies, &c. Fol. p. 68. under Provinces of Carnate, &c.

[L] " The Ganges, as the largest, has always been considered as the most holy river in Hindostan. Those who bathe in it are peculiarly sanctified ever after, and as a type of it, are marked on the forehead with a yellow mixture. The water itself is sent in jars sealed by the Bramins all over the peninsula of India and sold at an enormous price. The most extraordinary instance however of sense-

an opinion of the Gentoos, that when any family is attacked by a dangerous and contagious disorder, if one of the family sacrifices himself, it will preserve the lives of all the rest; that such a self-devotion or suicide being esteemed an object of glory, its anniversary is always observed by the family, as a day of rejoicing [M] and triumph.

Having thus investigated the nature of Gentoo-suicide, both as it was formerly and is at present practised through the large empire of Indostan, the

less superstition in the Hindoos relative to this element, is in that monstrous, that inhuman custom of exposing their sick by the sides of rivers, there to die. ("The exposing however appears to be often voluntary.") It is not uncommon for them even to stuff the mouths and nostrils of the diseased with the mud of the banks, that a speedier period may be put to their existence. But can any thing be more barbarous! Conceive an aged, or an infirm being borne down to low-water-mark on a pallet, probably not bereft of sense and reason, and there left to be washed away by the return of the tide, or to be destroyed by the first ravenous crocodile or tyger! Think not I here exaggerate; I have known instances of it myself. Nay a very few years only have elapsed, since an opulent and most respectable Hindoo, at the English settlement of Calcutta, was twice rescued from the jaws of death by a gentleman who was his friend, and who forcibly dragged him from his relations, who "at his own express command" had carried him on his funeral bier and had stretched him out, to await an inevitable death on the shores of the Ganges."—SULLIVAN, Phil. Rhap. Vol. II.

"The Kalmuck Tartars expose their sick and lame in small huts on the banks of rivers, where with a small stock of provision, they leave them to themselves to perish and never inquire after them afterwards. The wild Americans act less against humanity. They kill at once an aged and infirm parent to get rid of attendance on an useless being. This act, which appears shocking to us, appears humane and merciful to the Americans themselves. Accustomed to such sights from childhood, the horror of them wears away, and when bodily strength fails, the parties themselves make it "matter of choice." They call their kindred around, and smiling on the friendly hand that meditates the blow, they cheerfully resign themselves to their fate, to which they have always been accustomed to look, as the inevitable and the last and most meritorious act of their lives."—SULLIVAN, Phil. Rhap. Vol. I. 93.

"One of the most extravagant expences attending their marriages is, that though the parties should happen to live above an hundred leagues from the Ganges, yet they are obliged to have some of the water of that celebrated river. This the priests take care to furnish them with; for they keep it in jars for that purpose, which brings them in a considerable revenue."—Religious Ceremonies. Fol. p. 68. Provinces of Carnate, &c.

[M] A gentleman in a letter from Calcutta 1787 mentions his being present at a self-devotion of this sort; when a Gentoo threw himself into a pit full of combustibles, and then set it on fire amid the acclamations of numbers. Every possible method had been taken by the English and this gentleman in particular, to convince the man of the absurdity of his action, and to prevent its execution: but a Gentoo is not easily persuaded, being attached to his own laws and customs beyond any other nation.

inquiry shall be pursued through some other Asiatic nations. The opinions of the "Siamefe" relative to suicide, as well as [N] their fundamental doctrines of faith, though variously modified, appear to be much the same with those of the Gentoos, except in the point of the voluntary burning of wives, which does not seem to have prevailed among them. They not only think it permitted or lawful to kill themselves, but that it is a sacrifice advantageous to their souls and productive of much future felicity. For this purpose (if their [o] historian may be credited) they often hang themselves out of devotion on a tree, which they call "the excellent or holy Tree [P];" but which the Europeans call "the Tree of the Pagodes;" because the Siamefe plant it before these buildings or temples. It grows in the woods like other trees of the country, but it is not permitted to any one to transplant it into his garden; it being esteemed a

[N] The principal priests of the Siamefe are called "Sancrats;" (a strong allusion to the Shankratt or original language of the Gentoos.) These Sancrats study a sacred language, which they call Balie; from whence they deduce the rules of their worship. The inferior priests are called Talapoins; of whom some (like the ancient Bramans) live in woods and some in cities. The Siamefe believe in the Metempsychosis, and have, like the Gentoos, their "nine" happy regions above, and "nine" unhappy ones below the earth. They are very tender of the life of animals, and one of their greatest charities is to purchase the liberty of animals taken by others. They burn the bodies of the deceased with great funeral pomp, but no wives or animals of any sort with them.—See LOUBERE's Hist. of Siam.

[o] Monsieur de la Loubere, Envoy Extraordinary from the French King to the King of Siam, in the years 1687 and 1688. An English translation of whose History of Siam was printed in folio in London, 1693.

[P] Something similar to this is the story of an iron tree placed in a large river in China; from whence the inhabitants of that country are said oftentimes to precipitate themselves into the water in full persuasion, that such a self-devotion or suicide is the road to happiness. The following quotation concerning it is from Bartholinus, "De causâ contemptæ mortis a Danis," &c. Lib. II. c. vii. "Mirabile imprimis est, quod adnotat Altheriph Aldrifus autor Geographicus Nubienfis, Climatis secundæ parte decimâ. Porro flumen Chamdan Sinicum maximum esse, & habitationibus adjacentibus non infrequens. In hoc memorat autor libri memorabilium, esse arborem ingentem, sublimem, quæ ex ferro consistere dicitur, vocatam linguâ Indicâ Barfciul, fabricatam firmatamque in profundo fluminis, elevatam ab aquâ decem fere cubitis, & plus cubito latam, tres habentem in summitate ramos crassos, acuminatos, & quasi igne acutos. Prope ipsam sedet homo quidam legens librum ac fluvium hisce verbis compellans. "O plene benedictionum & semita Paradisi, quem & hominibus ostendis. Beatus, qui hanc arborem conscenderit seque super columnam istam dederit præcipiem!" Hisce sermonibus aliquis vel aliquot ex assistantibus commoti conscendunt arborem, seque super columnam projicientes incidunt in flumen & necantur; & qui ibi circumstant homines, deprecantur illis beatitudinem, affectionem Paradisi & gaudia æterna."

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sacred

sacred wood, out of which the images of their chief divinity are carved. It is observed however, that this religious zeal of self-devotion seldom discovers itself, till some great [Q] distaste of life, or some potent fear (such as of the king's displeasure in particular) has preceded [R].

Much is reported of the state of suicide among the "Japanese," both on religious and on other accounts; and its frequency among them has been

[Q] "About six or seven years, since a Pegin (or man of Siam) burned himself in one of the temples at Siam. He seated himself cross-legged, and besmeared his whole body with a very thick oil, or rather with a sort of gum, and set fire thereto. It was reported, that he was very much discontented with his family, which nevertheless lamented him exceedingly. After the fire had smothered and roasted him well, his body was covered with a sort of plaister; and thereof they made a statue, which was gilded and put upon the altar, as the statue of a saint."—LOUBERE.

[R] "Temples are erected to the honour of their sovereign idol, who is called Quiay-Paragray. On particular festivals his image is carried through their cities in a triumphant chariot; and the devotees prostrate themselves before the chariot, that the wheels may go over them. Others rush upon sharp spikes fastened to the wheels, which tear their flesh in pieces; and this is considered as the most meritorious action they can perform. When death ensues in consequence of their wounds, the people esteem them so much, that it is considered as an honour to be permitted to touch them; and even the spikes of the wheels are deemed sacred and laid up as precious relics.—The body of the sovereign pontiff was laid on the funeral pile, and six young persons of considerable rank submitted to be burned along with it. Next day after a priest had made an harangue before the king, their ashes were distributed as precious relics among the people.—In the funeral ceremonies of their kings, as soon as the corpse is laid in the grave or tomb, all his wives, concubines, ministers of state, and such others as had their dependence on him, drink a glass of strong poison each. These are all laid in the same grave with the king, in order to accompany him into the other world; and along with him likewise are buried six horses, twelve camels or elephants and twenty hunting dogs, with which he is to divert himself, when he comes into a state of bliss."—Religious Ceremonies in Siam, Ava, and Aracan.

"As soon as they arrive at the brink of the river, there is a galley to receive the royal corpse, with other attendant ones. In that which immediately follows the corpse are such of the great men of the kingdom, who have consented to be buried along with their sovereign; and in the other, which is closely shut up, are the favourite court-ladies, who have submitted to the same fate. The other galleys contain all sorts of provisions, equipages, clothes, presents and treasures. When arrived at the place appointed, the priests, who are indiscriminately named Bonzes, Bramins or Talapoins, attend the funeral pile upon which the king's body is laid, and on piles enclosed built of wood are the nobles, the ladies, elephants, horses and treasures. Fire being set to the piles, the priests sing hymns, and as soon as the whole is reduced to ashes, there is a deep pit made, and the contents are thrown into it; but no monument is erected in the place, lest the ashes of the dead should be disturbed."—Religious Ceremonies in Tonquin.

compared

compared with that of a "certain island" far separated from them, but with which "we" are much better acquainted [s]. An high contempt of life and applause of self-murder is said to be no where more notorious in modern days than in the empire of Japan. The inhabitants are said to be as gross [t] idolaters as any in the Asiatic quarter of the globe; and they practise the same sort of self-devotion [u] (at the instigation of their bonzes or priests) before the image of their idol Amida, as the Gentoos do before that of Bistnou or Jaggernaut; and all these (as well as Fohi of the Chinese) are supposed to be the same imaginary deities. The Japanese look for present and future happiness from their idol Amida and other deities, who (as is their common belief) voluntarily sacrificed their own lives for their good. They hold as sacred the memories of many melancholy persons, who have devoted themselves to death; they celebrate their fame and implore their intercession and good offices. They teach their children to repeat poems [x], in which "the virtues of their ancestors are celebrated, an utter contempt of life is inculcated, and suicide is "set up as the most heroic of actions." The pride and violence of their

[s] "The Japanese philosophers look upon suicide as a virtuous action, when it does not injure society. The violent and haughty disposition of these islanders frequently leads them to put it in practice; and this crime is much more common in Japan than even in England. The Japanese have been compared to the English for that insular haughtiness, which is common to both nations, and the disposition to suicide, which is thought to be so frequent on these two extremities of our hemisphere."—VOLTAIRE's *Hist. of Nations*. Japan.

[t] See an account in MacLaine's Translation of Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist.* Vol. IV. p. 228. of the Roman Catholic Missions into the kingdom of Japan, their primary success and final extirpation.

[u] "In Japan also some of the devotees of the idol Amida voluntarily drown themselves in his presence. In performing this horrid ceremony, the victim enters a small boat and dances to the sound of some musical instrument; after this he ties an heavy stone to his neck and another to the lower part of his belly, and then jumps into the water. On such occasions he is attended by all his relations and friends and several priests; who all consider him as a saint, and as one, who is gone to everlasting happiness. Some of them, who are timorous of throwing themselves into the water, get one of their friends to bore an hole in the keel of the boat, so that it sinks gradually. Others of these enthusiasts shut themselves up in a small inclosure in the form of a tomb, where they eat nothing, but a morsel of bread and water once in a day, and keep calling on their god Amida till they expire."—*Religious Ceremonies*.

Religious self-devotions also of a similar nature take place in several parts of America.

[x] See Raynal's *Hist. of East and West Indies*, Vol. I.

temper causes them frequently to reduce their speculative notions of suicide into practice and to destroy themselves on very frivolous occasions [y]. So indifferent are they to life, that they hold the extinction of the vital spark to be a matter of small consequence, except as far as their pride may be indulged and their memories rendered illustrious by its voluntary anticipation. That the practice of suicide is very rife in Japan seems agreed on all hands; but the most probable account of the matter is contained in the following passage of Kœmpfer. "These philosophers (says he, speaking of their wise men in Japan) do not only admit of self-murder, but look upon it, as an heroic and highly commendable action; and as the only means of avoiding a shameful death, or of falling into the hands [z] of a victorious enemy." To teach them to fly every shameful kind of death by the stroke of suicide (of which kind falling alive into the hand of an enemy might be deemed most ignominious) seems to be the foundation of all that heroism in self-murder, which is said to be inculcated into the minds of the Japanese youth [A].

[y] "The Japanese are an obstinate, capricious, resolute and whimsical people. They have a natural contempt of death, and rip open their bellies for the least fancy."—MONTESQUIEU, *Spirit of Laws*, B. VI. c. xiii.

Apud Japanes etiam hodie usitari aiunt, ut rex offensus nobilium alicui mandet, "Abi, ventrem tibi scinde;" et ille pareat faciatque.—LIPSIJ *Manuductio ad Stoicam Philosophiam*, Lib. III.

[z] See History of Japan, B. III. c. vii. entitled "Of the Siuto;" that is, the doctrine and way of life of their moralists and philosophers, written in High Dutch by Kœmpfer, and translated from his manuscript. Folio. 1728.

[A] As Korea borders on Japan, the following instance of a Korean suicide may find a place here. "Japan has been subject at different periods to the dominion of China. It once attempted, and nearly with success, to subjugate China in its turn. The peninsula of Korea was to afford the Japanese an entrance into China. The scheme failed from the singular heroism of a Korean nobleman, who, seeing inevitable ruin to his own countrymen, should the Japanese succeed, generously resolved to sacrifice his own life to the liberties of his country. The method he adopted was that of poison. He first drank of it himself infused in wine, and then presented it to the Japanese emperor, on whom alone the fate of the expedition (he knew) was to depend, and who had entrusted him with the secret. The emperor followed the example of the Korean and drank unknowingly of the poison; and they both soon expired in excruciating agonies. Hymns are sung by the youths and maidens of Korea, to perpetuate the memory of this patriotic suicide and hero, as follows. "Twine around his tomb, ye never-fading laurels. Ye nymphs and swains of Korea, scatter the grave of this your hero with the sweetest flowerets of the spring. And you, ye guardians and protectors of your country, resound forth his name, that his memory may live for ever."—SULLIVAN, *Phil. Rhap.* Vol. I. 192.

A notion

A notion seems to have prevailed in ancient times among all the Scythian tribes, that it was neither expedient nor becoming, to wear out the dregs of existence in prolonging life to the utmost; but on the contrary, that it was both honourable and meritorious to cut it short by a voluntary sacrifice, as soon as it was likely to become irksome to its possessor or useless and burdensome to the community; and this kind of death, whether procured immediately by their own hands, or performed at their own request by others, was esteemed the most [B] happy. Among bodies of people, who wandered about without fixed habitations, in search of provisions and pasturage, much attendance on the sick or affording maintenance to the infirm and aged, might neither be an easy task at all times, nor such an one as those, who lived by the spoils of their own arms, might think it incumbent on them to perform. Hence a notion might be inculcated from infancy, that the infirm in body, and those, who lived beyond the age of exercise and fatigue, ought to give place either by a forced or voluntary demise, to the claims of the rising generation; and that life ought not to be protracted for the mere consumption of those provisions, which its debilitated possessor was no longer able to assist in procuring. But the human mind in all ages has been found desirous of making a merit of necessity, and of endeavouring to gain some credit to itself, by its mode of performing the most involuntary action. It is not to be supposed, but that the desires of man "left to himself" would have yearned towards longevity in former times, as well as in the present; when we see such an anxiety and solicitude to prolong life to its utmost possible extent, even though encumbered with every infirmity, and sore pressed by a variety of troubles. But where the manners and customs of a

[B] "No other termination of life is proposed by them: but when any one is grown old, his relations and friends meet and put him to death; sacrificing with him some other cattle, whose flesh they roast and eat, as at a festive banquet, in honour of their friend's immolation: and this kind of death is esteemed the most happy."—HEROD. Lib. I. speaking of Massagætæ, a tribe of Scythians.

"They esteem it the most desirable kind of death, if when worn out with age, they are killed by their friends, cut in pieces and devoured, together with the flesh of other animals slain for that purpose. But those, who suffer themselves to die of disease, are thrown by as impious and only worthy to be devoured by wild beasts."—STRABO's Geog. Lib. II. Of Massagætæ.

Ammianus Marcellinus speaking of the Alani says, "Utque hominibus quietis & placidis otium est voluptabile, ita illos pericula juvant & bella. Judicabatur ibi beatus, qui in prælio profuderit animam. Senescentes enim & fortuitis mortibus mundo digressos, ut degeneres & ignavos conviciis atrocibus infestantur."—Lib. XXXI. 2.

people

people are repugnant to such ideas;—as where personal strength and vigour of body form “the whole character, as well as gain the whole esteem and attention,” there it may be conceived, that the deprivation of that strength by infirmities or the natural decays of age, may be deemed of worse consequence to its former possessor than the loss of life itself; and that the arm, which can no longer bend the bow or hurl the javelin, has nothing left but to raise its feeble powers to one more point of exertion, whose stroke is to be aimed against self. There is little doubt but that their companions of all ages would agree in pronouncing such a voluntary departure out of life to be both honourable and advantageous to the fame of its executor. Compeers in age would be rejoiced at the opportunity of thus making a virtue of necessity; while the younger order among them would be better pleased to find that to be a voluntary action, which they must otherwise have been compelled to enforce perhaps with some compunction; and they would also heartily join in bestowing all that applause and benediction upon others, which was likely to return hereafter to themselves on similar occasions. All this, joined to the constant habit of seeing such voluntary sacrifices, would confirm the mind in such a train of ideas, as would easily create a strong bias in favour of such kinds of voluntary death, as well as a prejudice not easily to be erased, of its superior happiness. Thus it may be conceived, that from its being a natural idea to arise among tribes of uncivilized warriors, “that old age was useless and burdensome,” it would necessarily follow, that its voluntary sacrifice must be deemed meritorious and honourable, because it tended to consult the good of the community by lopping off its useless branches, and thus contributing all the service in its power in the very last moments of life.

But whatever may be thought of thus endeavouring to account for the origin and progress of the honour bestowed in ancient times on suicide in old age, yet the fact itself is clear, that an idea prevailed among the Northern (as well as Indian) Asiatics, of the great efficacy of self-murder in old age towards procuring fame and future happiness, which was followed up in old times by much practice of the same. The temperate habits of life, the bracing qualities of their air, together with the constant pursuit of all vigorous and manly exercises, increased the powers of this race of northern Asiatics, and protracted them beyond what was experienced by the inhabitants of warmer and more relaxing

relaxing climates. Hence the fabulous idea was adopted by southern writers, who had very vague information of these distant and almost undescried regions, that the strength of these sturdy nations was never unfinewed even in extreme old age, as long as they continued in their own country; but that at length they despatched themselves, merely out of a satiety or tædium of having lived so long. Hence the stories of the inhabitants of the Riphæan mountains, and of those rocks and precipices from which they were said to fling themselves headlong, in order to put an end to their weariness of life [c].

But

[c] Pomponius Mela (*De situ orbis*, Lib. III. c. v.) writing of the Scythians, & de incolis Asiaticis litoris, qui primi Hyperborei super Aquilonem Rhiphæosque montes sub ipso fiderum cardine jacent, says, "Cultores justissimi & diutius quam ulli mortalium & beatus vivunt. Quippe festo semper otio læti non bella novère, non jurgia. Sacris operati maxime Apollinis; quorum primitias Delon misisse initio per virgines suas, deinde per populos subinde tradentes ulterioribus, moremque eum diu, & donec vitio gentium temeratus est, servasse referuntur. Habitat lucos silvasque, & ubi eos vivendi satietas magis quam tædium cepit, hilares, redimiti fertis semetipsi in pelagus "ex certa rupe" præcipites dant. Id iis finis exitum est."

Pliny in his *Natural History*, Lib. IV. c. xii. speaking of the Riphæan mountains says, "Pone eos montes utraque Aquilonem, gens felix (si credimus) quos Hyperboreos appellavere, anno degit ævo, fabulosa, celebrata miraculis. Ibi credunt esse cardines mundi extremique fiderum ambitus, &c.—Regio aprica, felici temperie, omni afflatu noxio carens. Domus iis memoræ lucique & Deorum cultus viritum gregatimque; discordia ignota & ægritudo omnis. Mors non nisi satietas vitæ, epulatis delibutisque senibus luxu, ex quadam rupe in mare salientibus. Hoc genus sepulture beatissimum. Quidam eos in primâ parte Asiæ litorum posuere, non in Europâ, quia sunt ibi simili consuetudine & situ, Atacori nomine. Alii medios fecere eos inter utrumque solem, &c.—nec licet dubitare de gente eâ, cum tot autores produnt, frugum primitias solitos Delon mittere Apollini, quem præcipuè colunt.

Bartholinus seems rather unwilling to relinquish the honour of these Riphæan suicides by ascribing them to Asiatics, but puts in a claim for the European Scythians among his own countrymen in Scandinavia, as appears from the following extract, Lib. II. c. vii. "Hinc multi (cultores Odini) quibus obitum in bello fors negabat, ex rupe se præcipites dabant, vel alio modo vitæ suæ vim addebant. Quod ex rupibus se dejecerint, spe æternitatis assequendæ, non aliud in nostris antiquitatibus nunc mihi occurrit exemplum, quam quod memorabile suppeditat Gothici & Rolfi historia; "Heic prope nostrum habitaculum Rupes est, Gillingi rupes dicta: illi scopulus quidam contiguus est, quem nos Prospiciæ scopulum dicimus. Hic tantæ altitudinis est, ut nullum animal inde descendens "ob arduum præcipitium vitam retineat. Ideo autem Prospiciæ scopulus dicitur, quod ibi Prospiciam nostram diminuiamus, cum inopina aliqua mala acciderint. Omnes nostri majores ibi sine morbo obeuntes, ad Odinum migrant; ideoque parentum nostrorum causâ nulla pati gravamina vel ex "pensas sustinere debemus, cum beatitudinis hęc locus omnibus nostris majoribus aditu liber fuerit." (Inde vitæ pertæsum Skapnartungum ejusque imitatos fatum liberos, se præcipites dedisse, ulterius persequitur

But leaving the ages of remote antiquity, it may not be unpleasant to a reader, who is unacquainted with the subject, to trace the customs concerning suicide, which have prevailed in later ages among our own northern neighbours, who owed their origin to the Gothic or Scythian tribes; and from whom also we are descended. These brought with them into Europe many usages of their Asiatic ancestors, and among the rest, the high honours that were paid to self-murder. Immediately previous to the introduction of Christianity into the [D] kingdoms of Scandinavia, suicide was a religious rite, and entitled its perpetrator to high distinction in the famous hall of the Scandinavian deity, Odin or Woden. It is not necessary to enter into a discussion of the various opinions that are entertained of Odin, as to what regards his identity, the period in which he lived, or whether he ever lived at all but in allegory and fiction: all that concerns us here is to make inquiry into that part of his worship, which paid such high honour to suicide [E].

Personal

persequitur caput secundum.) Quòd si tutò (continues Bartholinus) præfate Gothrici & Rolfi historię in multis fabulosę, in hac causâ fidere possemus; & si sufficienter prius convincatur Matthias a Michovia acriter negans esse uspiam in rerum naturâ montes Riphæos & Hyperboreos, & fictum esse urgens, quod Cosmographi & Historici tradunt de temperatissimâ Borę regione, ubi homines propter auram placidissimam beatè & diutissime vivant, donec tædio affecti de montibus sese in Oceanum præcipitent;—tunc locum haberet illa suspicio Scandinavię optimè convenire, quę de Hyperboreis memorant veteres."

N. B. Modern writers on geography still ascribe a very long life to the Norwegians.

[D] Most of the Scythian or Gothic nations on the frontiers of the Roman empire had been converted to Christianity before the end of the fourth century. Ulfla, the first Gothic bishop, translated the scriptures into the Gothic language about An. Dom. 370; a part of which version still remains. The Saxons settled in England were first converted to Christianity by the arrival of Austin the monk An. Dom. 597. The German Saxons were not converted, till the reign of Charlemagne, about An. Dom. 800. But as Charlemagne introduced Christianity at the point of his sword, and accompanied it with acts of persecution and violence, it was not so cordially received by them, even at that late period, as it would otherwise have been; and a number of the more resolute spirits among them, on the final reduction of Germany by Charlemagne, retired into Scandinavia, which was yet Pagan. Christianity was gradually established in Scandinavia (that is, in Norway, Sweden and Denmark) in the ninth and tenth centuries. The famous Rollo the Dane was a Pagan, till his invasions of France, when preferring his interest to his religion, he and his whole army were baptized in France, on the condition of his peaceable establishment in the dukedom of Normandy. This happened about An. Dom. 911.

[E] "It may not be unentertaining however briefly to mention the received opinions concerning the Scandinavian origin. Saxo Grammaticus has founded the Danish monarchy in the person of a king

Personal strength and valour being the life of martial enterprize, it was no wonder, that these ideas occupied the supreme place in the breasts of the Scythian or Gothic emigrants, who gradually became masters of all the northern, as well as southern parts of Europe. They were to hew their way through desolation and carnage to the establishment of new settlements and possessions for themselves and their posterity. All milder deities of course gave place in

king Dan more than 1000 years before Christ. Torfæus from Icelandic Sagas has shown, that Saxo's system drawn from old songs is false; and that Skiold son of Odin was the first king of Denmark, a little before our æra. Mallet in his History of Denmark has followed the plan of Torfæus, which is much more rational than Saxo's. In Sweden the history rests upon an author of wonderful merit and judgment for his age, Snorro Sturleson, who wrote in the thirteenth century, and whose history relates also to Denmark and Norway. He makes Odin contemporary with Pompey, from whom he flies into the north; and subduing Scandinavia, keeps Sweden for himself and commences the line of kings. The Norwegian history rests on the diligence of Torfæus, who from Icelandic chronicles, genealogies, &c. concludes Odin to have come into Scandinavia in the time of Darius Hytaspis, or about 520 years before Christ. Some northern antiquaries also finding in the Edda, that Odin was put as the supreme Deity, and that a total uncertainty prevailed in the old accounts about his age, have imagined to themselves another Odin, who lived about 1000 years before our æra;—a mere arbitrary date, and which the formers of this system had better have put 500 years before Christ, as Torfæus the most diligent of northern antiquaries has done. Mallet, who has taken matters as he found them, supposes two Odins, and looks on the last, who flourished in Pompey's time, as an Asiatic magician; nay he tells us some believe three Odins. Torfæus we have seen in his Norwegian history infers him to have lived 500 years before Christ, whom in his *Series regum Daniæ* he had thought lived only 50. Here is the secret: "Odin never existed." The whole affair is an allegory. The later Edda, which was also compiled by Snorro in the thirteenth century, fully confirms the idea, that Odin was never in life, but was merely the "God of War." In this Edda, Thor is the son of Odin. Mallet well observes, that through this whole Edda Odin the hero, who led the Goths from Asia, is confounded with Odin the God of War, or supreme God of the Norwegians. True; yet is there no confusion. There was but one Odin, "the God." The hero is a non-existence. The whole progress of the Goths from Asia under Odin is a direct allegory. It was the God of War who conducted the Goths; literally they fought their way against the Celts and Fins. There was one Odin the God of War, who was contemporary in all ages. The kings of Sweden, Denmark and Norway, nay the whole Anglo-Saxon kings, owned him as first father; that is, they were entitled solely to martial prowess for their thrones. The Goths or Scythians by war subdued and peopled Scandinavia; an event that happened at least 500 years before Christ; and was accomplished by different nations (of Goths) under different leaders, but all under the guidance of Odin God of War. If he ever existed, it was in the first Scythian empire. Romulus was the son of Mars, as the northern kings were of Odin; but Mars was neither the human father of Romulus, nor reigned in Latium just before him."—See PINKERTON'S. *Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths*, Part II, c. v. Printed 1787.

their mythology to the God of War, who under the name of Odin (or Woden) was their supreme object of worship, and whose favourite title (as it was believed) was that of "Father of Slaughter [F]." To such a God of terror, devastation and carnage, what complexion of mind could be deemed so acceptable, as the indulgence of a sovereign contempt of danger and death? or what sacrifice could be devised more grateful than the effusion of human blood [G]? The intrepidity and bravery of the Scandinavian nations was never called in question; but their ideas were so concentrated in war and bloodshed, that they disdained every mode of dying, which was not connected with violence. Indeed all their expectations of future happiness were so artfully disposed by those (whoever they were) who had the framing of them, as must unavoidably tend to breed a race of sanguinary heroes upon earth fit for ravage and conquest wherever they went. The first general idea which was impressed on the minds of the worshippers of Odin was, "the honour of dying in battle." Greedy of death they sought it with fury, and when struck in battle by a mortal blow, they fell with cheerfulness and smiles of content. From hence it followed among a nation of warriors, that any kind of death was deemed inglorious, mean and disgraceful, which was not in some measure connected with blood and violence. The joys [H] of Asgardia (the Elysium of Odin) were framed on this principle. All were excluded from Odin's "Feast of Heroes," who breathed out their souls on a bed, suffering themselves to be overcome by disease or the infirmities of old age. In Asgardia was situated the hall or palace of Odin; where he himself was seated on a throne to receive the souls of his departed heroes. This place was denominated [I] "Valhalla;" and though primarily designed for the reception of those, who died in battle, was also open to all such, as being necessarily deprived of that opportunity of glory, yet discovered an eagerness to participate its pleasures, by inflicting a forcible death of any kind on themselves; it being an established opinion, that such souls as

[F] Oalfodr, hoc est, Stragis Pater.—See BARTHOLINUS, p. 352.

[G] See BARTHOLINUS, pages 218, 388, and 394.

[H] The people of the north (Scandinavia) conceived Asgardia or their Elysium to be placed in Scythia somewhere on the banks of the Tanais from whence Odin came to them, and to which he returned to live for ever.—See BARTHOLINUS, p. 405, &c.

[I] Signifying the Hall of those, who died by violence.—See BARTHOLINUS.

were detruded from the body "by any [κ] violent method went strait to Valhalla." It was a tradition also, that Odin himself having formerly resided in person among his worshippers, in order to instruct them in religious matters and to lead them forth to new possessions and conquests, took the following method of retiring from the earth again to his eternal mansions. Having convened his senate of demigods and all the heads of his people, he proceeded to inform them, that he was now about to quit his bodily form and terrestrial abode, in order to return and live for ever in Asgardia, where he would prepare a seat of happiness for the souls of departed heroes. He then ordered preparations to be [L] made for burning his body in such a manner and with such ceremonies, as that it should appear as if his soul was retiring from its corporeal integuments to celestial habitations. All ceremonials being adjusted, Odin first wounded himself with the point of his own sword; giving out, that by this ceremony he not only appropriated to himself the souls of all such as should die a violent [M] and bloody death, but set them an example of it in his own method of leaving the world; signifying also to the surrounding multitude, "that the soul must be detruded by some violence from the body, in order to be admitted among departed heroes." The great object of adoration in the north having taken this method of escaping from the sight of his worshippers by committing violence on his own person, a wide field (we may be sure) was laid open for all the extravagancies of religious suicide, to which the adorers of Odin thought they were so particularly invited by their chief deity, and for which he held forth such ample rewards. As the obtaining a seat in Odin's hall was the grand object to which his worshippers aspired, and for which they

[κ] Nostratibus sane hoc erat infallibiliter persuasum, animas, non vulgares, neque senio morbove, fed cruentâ morte & vi corporibus exeuntis, rectâ ad Valhallam ferri.—BARTHOLINUS, p. 317.

[L] This was a piece of shrewd policy in this mighty leader of the Scythian tribes (whoever he was). Having once raised himself into a deity in the estimation of his followers, (which he is said to have done by his great skill in magic, as well as prowess in arms) he was unwilling to sink again into a mere mortal. But finding himself pressed by human infirmities and the approach of old age, he hit on the expedient of a pompous and voluntary departure from earth, that he might not lessen his future dignity by a necessary submission to the stroke of fate.—See BARTHOLINUS's Account of Odin's Death.

[M] Odin assigned over to Freya, a woman of the first dignity in his court, the office of receiving the souls of such noble women, as put an end to their own lives by any act of violence.—BARTHOLINUS, p. 353.

were at all times so ready to sacrifice their lives, it may not be disagreeable to such readers as are not already acquainted with this subject, to give some further account of Valhalla [N] and its supposed inhabitants.

Valhalla was assigned (as has been before observed) for the reception of all those, who died a death of violence. But the rude inhabitants of the North, having no conception of a soul's existence without a body, though they burned the latter to ashes, yet imagined it to be some how or other reunited to its soul again in the palace of Odin; where it was to enjoy for ever and without interruption, such pleasures as affected it most on earth. The most honourable seats in this hall were assigned to those, who fell in battle, and who could reckon up the greatest number of enemies, whom they had previously slain. On the other hand, such were entirely excluded from the joys of Valhalla, who suffered themselves to die of a lingering illness or of old age, since violence and bloodshed were the only passports of admission into the presence of this demon of destruction. Hence numbers, to whom their unhappy stars seemed to refuse a glorious fall in the field of battle, were eager to plunge their swords into their own hearts, to precipitate themselves from rocks, or by any other means to compass forcible death, being assured, that by taking this method (and by this alone) they should have an immediate admission into Valhalla. But neither was it deemed so honourable to approach the throne of Odin [o] single and unattended. On the contrary, a superior deference was paid to those, who entered this bloody hall with the greatest crowd of attendant, voluntary victims. Hence the wives, the friends, and slaves of the deceased lord were assiduous to accompany him into the other world, and therefore frequently and in numbers sacri-

[N] See various parts of Bartholinus, who collected from the Edda and Fragments of Scaldic Poetry. The Edda was compiled in the thirteenth century by Snorro Sturleson in the Icelandic tongue; and is studied by the learned of Denmark and Sweden, as the most valuable remains of their ancient traditions. Bartholinus gives the preference to the Fragments of the Poets, quos Scaldos septentrio indigitavit (says he in his preface); and accordingly he has made great use of them, as well as of the Edda, in his work, *De causis contemptæ mortis a Danis adhuc Gentilibus*.—Some of these Scaldic fragments or odes have received an English dress from the pen of Gray, who refers to Bartholinus for the original in the Norse tongue.

[o] *Nostri desiderium cum turbâ & quàm maximo comitatu Inferos petere.*—BARTHOLINUS, p. 514 and 507, &c. where a number of instances are adduced of the voluntary death of wives, friends, &c. to accompany their chief.

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ficed themselves at his tomb. By these means they secured to themselves also the joys of Valhalla, from which place all slaves or persons of mean condition [p] were utterly excluded, unless they exhibited these proofs of honouring their superior by this voluntary destruction of themselves at his decease.

Though it does not immediately belong to the point in view, yet, in order to wind up the subject of Odin's Hall, a few lines shall be added on the pleasures expected to be enjoyed in this grand Elysium of the North. In reward then for these bloody services, the persons admitted into Valhalla were to enjoy all such pleasures in perfection and for ever, as had delighted them most on earth. They were admitted into a participation of divinity with Odin and his senate of demigods, where they were still to exercise their beloved war, fighting mock battles under the [q] standards of these deities. After these exercises they returned into the hall, where they recreated themselves in that manner, which next to fighting constituted their chief employment on earth—the pleasures of inebriation. But here Odin reserved to himself a marked superiority. For he alone regaled himself with wine, and left ale and mead (the beloved potations of the northern nations) [r] to be the beverage of his demigods and heroes, who were to enjoy moreover the supreme delight of making their potations out of the skulls of their enemies.

Such then was the religion and such the self-murder deemed honourable by the worshippers [s] of Odin. Though their ideas of futurity were grossly

[p] See Bartholinus, 385, &c.

[q] They were called Monoheroes—quod illi soli in altera vitâ militiam exercerent, sub vexillis Deorum pugnaturi.—BARTHOLINUS.

[r] See Bartholinus and his extracts from northern writers and Scaldic poetry, concerning the great use and abuse of ale and mead in Scandinavia, Britain, Germany, &c. in Lib. II. Chap. xii.

Pliny also writes as follows, 'Lib. XIV. c. xxii. Est & occidentis populis sua ebrietas fruge madida; pluribus modis per Gallias Hispaniasque, nominibus aliis sed ratione eadem. Hispanie jam & vetustatem ferre ea genera docuerunt. Ægyptus quoque e fruge sibi potus similiter excogitavit. Nullaque in parte mundi cessat ebrietas; meros quippe hauriunt tales succos, nec diluendo, ut vina, mitigant. At herculè illic tellus fruges parere videbatur. Heu mira vitiorum solertia, inventum est, quemadmodum aqua inebriaret!'

[s] The Druids also favoured suicide on religious principle; as appears from the following maxim or rule of theirs. "There is another world, and they who kill themselves to accompany their friends thither, will live with them there."—See RAPIN's Introduction to Hist. of England.

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ensual, yet their frequent suicide was wholly of a religious tendency, and was accomplished, not with any view of liberating themselves from dangers or troubles on earth, but solely for the purpose of forwarding (as they thought) their happiness after death: and in this it agreed with Asiatic suicide in general. Whereas the suicide countenanced by some Western philosophers (as we shall soon find), as well as that of its abettors in modern days, looks entirely another way; viz. only towards a relief from present sufferings, which there would be more fortitude in sustaining with firmness than in cutting short by self-murder. One general reflection should not be forgotten in concluding these remarks on Asiatic suicide—"that it must ever be praise-worthy to act on principle, even though that principle be founded on gross error." For whatever reason "we" may have to condemn such or such maxims of Indian philosophy and morality, yet we are not at liberty to find fault with those, whose practice corresponds with their faith. Though therefore even in the present days an Indian wife burns, an old Gentoo is exposed on the banks of the Ganges, and a Japanese drowns for the honour of Amida, yet there may be to themselves more honour than blame in so doing. Be it also further remembered, that whatever allowance be due to the Asiatic Pagan on this occasion, the more enlightened European can make no use of such an indulgence, so as ever to deprive himself of life, without incurring the highest degree of censure: and that for the very same reason in both, "a consistency of principle and practice,"

C H A P. III.

The opinions of the ancient philosophers on the subject of suicide only to be collected from scattered passages in their writings, or from what has been handed down by others concerning their tenets.—Pythagoras and Socrates condemned all suicide, as an offence against the authority of God.—Plato speaks more favourably of suicide in particular situations; such as heavy misfortunes, extreme poverty, &c.—Sinful only (he says) when arising from indolence and timidity; may be shown to, when we are in great danger of becoming impious and sacrilegious to the gods, or hurtful

to the state; in cases of incurable sickness.—Plato makes it an offence chiefly against self and state.—New Platonists.—Philosophic death explained.—Plotinus condemns suicide on abstract notions of the nature of the soul and its union with the body.—Porphyry follows the ideas of his master Plotinus.—Macrobius argues on the same grounds.—Olympiodorus's sentiments in favour of suicide under particular circumstances, and grounded on his own interpretation of the opinions of the old and new Platonists.—Aristotle deems it an offence against the state; and not defensible on selfish and interested motives.—Epicurus; in what his pleasure, as the summum bonum, consisted; how warped by his followers.—His pleasure according to its best interpretation indolent and inactive.—The same indolence and unconcern about human affairs attributed to the gods of the Epicureans.—They allowed therefore of no rewards or punishments in a future state, if indeed they allowed of any futurity at all.—A contradiction between the advice of Epicurus and the immediate tendency of his doctrines.—The tendency of Epicurean doctrines lead immediately to suicide, when the troubles of life become great and are deemed irremediable.

AS a full discussion of the subject of suicide in all its points of view, seems never to have employed the thoughts of any ancient philosopher; or at least, as no regular treatise of that kind has been preserved to our days, all that can be done on this head, is to collect such scattered passages in the writings of the ancients, as allude to the practice, and which either condemn or speak favourably of it in general terms, according to the opinions and doctrines of the different sects to which the writers belonged.

Pythagoras, who is thought to have gathered much of his knowledge and philosophy from India, and to have brought with him from thence his grand doctrine of the metempsychosis, seems however to have converted that doctrine to a different and more rational purpose than those sages of the East, who approved of self-murder. For whereas the Bramans carried their contempt of life to so high a pitch as to imagine, they should be rewarded in their course of transmigrations, in case they anticipated the stroke of death, the great founder of the Italic sect proceeded on contrary grounds. Pythagoras considered the soul, whilst it was united to its corporeal tegument, to be in a state inferior to that, to which by its proper powers and faculties it belonged; and consequently to
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be in a state of punishment or at least of probation. Hence he deduced the propriety and necessity of remaining submissively in life, till we were released by nature or the command of the Deity: otherwise our souls would be subject through our want of patience to degradation instead of exaltation in the order of changes. As the Indian sages therefore entertained high notions of the merits of self-murder, so Pythagoras and his followers universally condemned its practice. "The short remnant of life, that appertains to old men, is neither to be greedily coveted nor deserted without cause; since Pythagoras forbids any one to depart from his guard or station in life, without the authority and command of his general, that is [T], of God." What the Pythagoreans judged to be an authority from God in this case may be partly collected from the following passage [U] in Athenæus. "Euxitheus the Pythagorean asserted (according to his master's tenets) that the souls of all men were bound to the body in this life, as a punishment; and that the Deity had declared, that unless they remained quietly in these prisons, till He should be pleased of his own accord to give them a release, they should suffer more and heavier calamities. Wherefore all, who are cautious and fearful of losing the present state of their souls, avoid and dread a "voluntary" departure from life, being persuaded, that the death, which happens from old age, is of all others the most cheerfully to be submitted to, as being that separation of the soul from the body, which can be said with most propriety, to fall out by the will and decree of the Deity. Such are the opinions, which we embrace." The following conversation of Socrates tends also to elucidate the Pythagorean notions, of what was to be regarded as a leave of departure from the Deity; as well as to explain that great man's own sentiments on the same subject. The passage indeed is not free from some obscurities, but is sufficiently decisive upon the whole of a perfect coincidence in sentiments between these two shining lights of antiquity on the subject before us. This famous conversation on the immortality of the soul was supported in the prison between Socrates and his friends on the day on which he was compelled to drink poison

[T] Illud breve vite reliquum nec avidè appetendum senibus, nec sine causâ deferendum sit: vetatque Pythagoras injussu imperatoris, id est Dei, de præsidio & statione vite decedere.—Cic. de Senectute.

[U] See his *Deipnosophists* or *Table-Talk*, Lib. IV. p. 157.

by order of the Athenian magistrates; and it is related by Phædo in the dialogue bearing his name among Plato's works. All that concerns the present subject is contained in the following [x] extract. *Socrates*. "You may give this answer [y] then, O Cebes, to Evenus, and moreover bid him farewell, and follow me, if he be wise. For I go hence to-day ("meaning, he dies") by order of the Athenians." *Simias*. "What is it, Socrates, that you are recommending to Evenus [z]? I have often met with that man; but from the judgment I have formed of him, I think he will not be easily persuaded to do what you say." *Socrates*. "What then! is not Evenus a philosopher?" *Simias*. "It should seem so." *Socrates*. "Not only Evenus then, but whoever judges rightly of this business, will wish to do so [A]. However he will not perhaps offer violence to himself, because that, they say, is forbidden." *Cebes*. "How is it then, Socrates, that not allowing it to be lawful to commit violence on oneself, yet you advise a philosopher to follow one, who is dying?" *Socrates*. "What, Cebes, have not you and Simias heard of these matters from Philolaus, with whom you were so intimate?" *Cebes*. "Nothing clearly." *Socrates*. "But I only speak from hearsay of these [B] things; yet what I have heard I will communicate without reserve. For

[x] See Plato's *Phædo* near the beginning. *Ταύτα εις, ὡς Κηρύκος, Εὐνού φραζέται, &c.*

[y] Which refers to what is mentioned in the preceding part of the dialogue.

[z] According to a marginal note at the place in Stephens's folio edit. of Plato's works, "Evenus was a Parian sophist (a would-be philosopher) who led a voluptuous life, and was particularly fearful of death." Those who consult the original will find in the preceding part of the dialogue, that Evenus had been somewhat jealous of Socrates, because he had been writing verses in prison; and that he was afraid of being rivaled by Socrates in poetry. But the philosopher bids his friend tell Evenus, he need not fear that, but that now he might have an opportunity, if he pleased, of rivaling Socrates in the manner of his death. This may be implied from what goes before, and gives an air of pleasantry and irony to that part of the passage before us relative to Evenus, which is very consistent with the usual Socratic style of conversation.

[A] That is, will wish to follow me in such a kind of death: since it may become a philosopher on many occasions to wish to meet death, though not to hasten it voluntarily; and on none sooner than in defence of his principles and virtuous manners, which was the case with Socrates.

[B] Namely, of Philolaus's opinion of these matters; viz. of death and its consequences, and what a philosopher ought to think of embracing it. N. B. Philolaus of Crotona was a Pythagorean, and the first who divulged the philosophy of Pythagoras, by selling the works, which contained it, to Plato; says Forney in his *History of Philosophy*.

"surely it is most of all becoming one, who is just about to emigrate from hence to form in his mind some idea of what this migration is likely to prove, and to converse about it; besides, what better can we do, till the setting of the sun?" *Cebes*. "But why, Socrates, do they say, it is wicked to kill oneself? For in regard to your inquiry just now, I have before-time heard from Philolaus and from some others, "that it does not become a man to do so;" but I never heard the matter discussed and [c] laid open by any one." *Socrates*. "If you are attentive then you shall quickly hear. Perhaps it appears extraordinary to you, why, the position being so plain and simple, "that it may happen to a man to prefer death to life," why (I say) it should not be permitted to those, to whom it might be of advantage to die, to administer that advantage to themselves rather than wait for another to do it for them? You may smile and think it absurd, that this should not always be lawful: but there is reason in the prohibition. Truly that which is maintained in the sublimer parts of philosophy [d] concerning these matters, "that we men are, as it were, on guard, and that it does not become any one to relieve himself from his station, or to fly away of his own motion, seems to me an important doctrine, but not of easy or vulgar comprehension. But truly, Cebes, I think it also well said, "that the gods take care of us, and that we are as one of their possessions:" Is not this your opinion too?" *Cebes*. "Yes certainly." *Socrates*. "Would you not then be angry, if one of your slaves

[c] The meaning seems to be, "I have heard the thing in general asserted to be wrong, but never heard the reasons assigned for its being so."

[d] There is some difficulty here with respect to the meaning of the word, *τα ἀποπλά*; but see a note of the learned Bishop Warburton on this passage, where he translates it, "The Mysteries."—Div. Leg. Vol. I. B. ii. f. 4.

His Lordship likewise mentions the exoteric and esoteric, that is, the popular and secret doctrines of the philosophers. He allows the impiety of suicide to be an exoteric doctrine, on account of its practice being so pernicious to society; but he seems to doubt its being an esoteric opinion also of the philosophers among themselves. But without entering into this abstruse point of popular and secret doctrines, which would carry us too great lengths, it seems as if Socrates in this place first mentioned, what had been usually advanced against suicide by Pythagoras and other preceding philosophers, concerning the station of man, which he thinks though an important, yet an abstruse argument, and not much levelled to common capacities. He therefore proceeds to make use of such other allusions and arguments of his own, as seem best adapted to explain the impiety of suicide in an easy and familiar manner.

"should

“ should kill himself, when you had given him no intimation of your pleasure, “ that he should depart out of life? and if you then had power over him, “ would you not punish him?” *Cebes*. “ Certainly.” *Socrates*. “ Perhaps “ then on the same grounds it is not against reason, that it does not become “ any one to kill himself, before God has imposed some necessity of doing it “ upon him, as He has at this time [E] on me.” *Cebes*. “ This is very con- “ sistent. But as to what you said before, “ that philosophers might deservedly “ be anxious to die,” that must be absurd, if your present assertion be true, “ viz. “ that the Deity has a regard and care for us, and that we are a part “ of his property and possession.” For there can be no reason, why the most “ prudent and wise men should not at all times grieve to be removed from that “ care and providence, which the good gods and great governors of the universe “ exercise over them. A wise man can never think, that he is able to take “ better care of himself when delivered from such protectors; but a fool indeed “ may judge it right to fly from such masters, because he is not capable of “ seeing, that what is good is not to be fled from, but rather continued in; “ and therefore a fool may fly without reason. But he, who has a mind “ enriched with sense, must always desire to remain with Him, who would take “ the best care of him. And so, Socrates, the contrary of that which was before “ maintained, is the more probable; since it rather seems to behove wise men “ to repine at death and fools to suffer [F] it gladly.”

A few remarks must be made on this passage, which will rather concern its general tendency than be employed in endeavouring to clear up a few obscure

[E] The necessity Socrates here alludes to, is his being “ compelled” to put an end to his own life by drinking the hemlock-draught. He says towards the end of *Phædo*, “ as one ready to depart when “ Fate calls him, as it now does me.”

[F] It must be remarked here, that Socrates’s friends had been persuading him to fly from prison, as he easily might, and to live secretly among them. But he thought it injurious to the state to attempt an evasion of its laws however unjustly enforced against himself. *Cebes* therefore artfully gives this turn to the argument and attempts to persuade Socrates (from his own proposition of a superintending Providence) that a fool only (and not a wise man) could rejoice in putting himself out of the care of such a Providence by suffering death when he could avoid it. This leads Socrates to discourse on the soul and its immortality, by which he would prove to his friends, that though his body should be dead on earth, yet his soul or nobler part would be more than ever under the protection of the gods:—the discussion of which point takes up the rest of the dialogue.

phrases. From the words of the valediction of Socrates to Evenus an important question seemed to arise, "whether a philosopher might not on certain occasions wish for and eagerly desire death rather than life?" This Socrates affirms. But this being acknowledged, a second question presents itself, "why then is he not at liberty to pursue what would conduce to his happiness by killing himself?" Here Socrates demurs; and upon his friends desiring him to unfold his reasons, he proceeds thus; "because man is situated in this life, as it were on a post or station, which he must not quit without leave; because the gods exert a providential care over us, on which account we are a part (as it were) of their property and possessions; and because, we should think it unjust and punishable (if it were in our power to punish) in any slave of our own, to kill himself without our leave." These are reasons why a philosopher, though he may be ever so desirous of dying, has no power or authority to hasten death's arrival by an immediate stroke of his own hand. He must be clear, that he has leave from the Deity to quit his station, before he presumes to do it of his own accord. This leave can be made manifest no otherwise than by a "visible necessity of dying;" a strong and pertinent instance of which necessity was exhibited in himself. He administered the deadly potion to himself, by which he might be said in some sense to kill himself; but then as a refusal so to do was not in his own power, necessity stamped innocence on the action, or in other words was, as it were, his passport from above or leave for quitting his earthly station. It may also be further remarked, that these arguments against suicide are very judiciously interwoven (however accidental the introduction of them may seem to be) in the beginning of the *Phædo*, that though on account of the soul's immortality afterwards proved and its superior enjoyments in a future state, it might seem desirable to obtain that state, as soon as possible, even by suicide; yet that for the substantial reasons here adduced, we are to wait the pleasure of the gods without hastening our own departure. This Pythagorean and Socratic doctrine is further illustrated in the following passage of Tully, where it must be observed, that he is speaking not in his own person, but in that of the family of Scipio [c].

"Since,

[c] See *Somnium Scipionis* in Tully. In this fragment, P. Scipio *Æmilianus*, the destroyer of Carthage, is supposed to be conversing in a dream with the shades of his ancestors, who are exhorting him to follow the steps of their glory, in order that he might be exalted into their present situation.

The

“ Since, O sacred father, since this is life, to be with you and the gods above, as I hear Africanus saying, why do I remain on earth, and not rather hasten to join you above?—Not so neither (replies Paulus Æmilius). For unless that God, who pervades every thing, which you see, shall free you from the prison of the body, there is no [H] access for you to us here. For this is the condition of man’s generation; that he should defend that globe, which stands in the midst of all this temple of God and is called the earth: and a soul has been given to man of those eternal fires, which you call constellations and stars: which being globular and animated with divine spirits, perform their orbits with wonderful celerity. Wherefore, O Publius, you and every one must retain his soul in the custody of his body, nor must you emigrate from this life without his leave, by whom your soul was given you; lest you should seem to fly from the office assigned you by the Deity.” It is with pleasure then to be observed, that two of the brightest lights of antiquity Pythagoras and Socrates are to be found arguing on the same just grounds with respect to the impiety of suicide; viz. that it is an offence against the authority, the providence and moral government of the Deity.

It is now time to advert to the sentiments of “ Plato;” which we shall find were somewhat more lax on the point of suicide than those of his great master Socrates. In the ninth book [1] of *Laws*, Plato, after assigning the punishment to be [K] inflicted on one, who voluntarily murders his parent, child, brother, or any near relation, proceeds as follows. “ But what must he suffer, who shall have destroyed his “ nearest” relation and best friend? who shall

The younger Scipio, warmed with their description, is for accelerating his arrival among them by suicide; but is checked for his improper ardour in the above manner.

[H] The expression is strong—*huc tibi aditus patere non potest*.

[1] The code of laws digested by Plato for the imaginary colony of Cretans, contains the substance of the institutions of Minos, Lycurgus, Solon and other ancient legislators, with such additions, alterations and improvements of his own, as he judged expedient.

[K] The punishment was, “ that the party guilty of so heinous a crime should be killed by the magistrates, and the body dragged naked out of the city to some common highway, where the magistrates should severally cast a stone at the head of the criminal, by way of purification of the city. The body was then to be carried beyond the limits of the region, and there be thrown out unburied according to the laws.”

“ have

“ have deprived “ himself” by violence of that further portion of life allotted
 “ him by the fates? who shall have committed this action, when compelled to
 “ it neither by the judgment of the city, nor by any extraordinary sorrow or
 “ inevitable turn of fortune, nor driven to it by any shame of extreme dis-
 “ tress and poverty, but who hath unjustly deprived himself of life through
 “ mere sloth and subjection to a timid mind? The laws of purgations and
 “ burial [L] that are suitable to such an one God best knows. However let
 “ the next of kin inquire of the interpreters and search out the laws respecting
 “ these matters, and as it is determined by them, so let them do. Let his
 “ burying-place be solitary, where no one else is deposited; let him also be
 “ buried in those places, which are at the extremities of the twelve [M] parts
 “ of the region—places wild and nameless; and let him be buried in such
 “ obscurity, that neither statue nor inscription shall appear to mark his sepul-
 “ ture.” However pointed the punishment of suicide ought to be in Plato’s
 estimation (for in these laws he must be supposed to exhibit his own sentiments)
 yet there appears to be much relaxation of the Socratic censures of all kind of
 voluntary suicide, and much enlargement of that divine permission thought
 necessary by him to render it innocent. For in the above passage a wide door
 is opened for the admission of its practice; since all persons under sore affliction
 or adversity may plead exemptions for themselves to commit it without blame. It
 may be said [N] indeed, that it is the part of a weak and timid mind alone not to
 bear pain or adversity with patience and resolution; not to submit to just
 shame and indignity; and therefore that every suicide is ultimately involved [O]

[L] In a passage towards the end of the tenth book of the Republic, Plato makes a person supposed
 to be returned from the regions of the dead, on purpose to relate what he saw there, speak thus.
 “ Those who had been unjust or cruel in their lives were in general punished in a tenfold proportion;
 “ but those, who had been impious towards the gods or their parents or who had been “ murderers of
 “ themselves” were punished in a still higher degree.” But he mentions no particulars of their
 punishment.

[M] His imaginary colony was to be divided like Attica into twelve regions or districts.

[N] Justus Lipsius in his “*Manuductio ad Stoicam Philosophiam*, Lib. III. Diff. xxii.” makes the
 following remarks on this passage of Plato; “*Vides exceptiones poni duas ferè nostri Stoici (of whom
 he is speaking) etiam magis fatendum est restrictas. Nam excipit damnationem publicam, qualis in
 Socrate & Senecâ; excipit graves casus, extremam paupertatem & ignominiam, ad quæ capita reliqua
 ferè trahas. Culpæ duntaxat formidolosos & nos hercè damnamus.*”

[O] See quotations from Aristotle hereafter, which proceed on these very grounds.

in guilt through that action, inasmuch as it is at all times to a certain degree the effect of a want of fortitude and resolution to suffer. But even allowing some truth in this, it does not however seem to convey Plato's meaning in this place, who certainly intended to make the above exceptions, as distinct causes of suicide, not to be confounded with its guilty performance; consequently Plato has enlarged the grounds of innocence in suicide. He speaks obscurely in the above passage of its offence against the Deity; but seems to consider the injury as chiefly committed against self:—"he who cuts off his dearest friend—Himself; who cuts short the portion of life allotted to himself, how shall he be punished?"

In another passage of the ninth book of Laws Plato speaks more plainly of the allowance of suicide in some particular cases. "A crime so great as sacrilege (says he) can scarce be committed by a well-educated citizen; but his domestics or foreigners may have weakness enough in their nature to fall into such enormities. Wherefore I will prescribe laws, as well against sacrilege, as against other crimes of the highest nature. Be this spoken then by way of previous caution and admonition to him, whom a nefarious lust urges by day and rouses by night, to approach the temples of the gods for the purposes of theft. O extraordinary man! not the common infirmities of human nature, or the mere impulses of a wicked demon alone incite you to such an impious conduct; but that dereliction of all that is good and divine in you, arising from old and unexpiated crimes, which like a teasing gad-fly, sting and torment the man. But these emotions ought to be striven against with all your might. Attend therefore to the method of doing it. When a sacrilegious thought first arises in your mind, fly to every method of expulsion. Fly an humble suppliant to the altars and sacrifices of those gods, who deliver from the suggestions of evil. Fly to the company and conversation of good men, among whom you may partly hear, and partly be engaged yourself in urging the necessity incumbent on all men to practise what is just and honourable. But especially fly from the society of the wicked, without casting one lingering look behind you. If the malady after the performance of these things suffer the man to breathe again and recover himself, all is well over; but if otherwise, then adjudging death to be preferable to such constant evil suggestions, "cease to live." If they, in whose minds any impious intentions

" or

“ or desires subversive of the state shall have arisen, be persuaded by these
 “ previous admonitions, we dismiss them in silence without further reproof;
 “ but against those, who despise our forewarnings, (that is, who neither cease
 “ to intend doing the evil nor yet kill themselves) we straitly denounce the
 “ following threats and punishments,” &c. This passage has been given at
 large, because from hence it appears, that in Plato’s estimation a man should
 commit suicide, when he finds he cannot overcome his evil propensities, rather
 than run the hazard of being impious and sacrilegious to the gods, or dangerous
 to his country. But it must also be observed, that he sends the offender first to
 every rational and religious method of reclaiming himself from his evil ways,
 which if he cannot accomplish, the philosopher only allows suicide at last, as a
 sort of inferior evil, as an instance that the life of an individual is to give way
 to the superior good of the community. But though an Heathen might have
 his difficulties of self-conquest, a Christian (if sincere) can have none unfur-
 mountable, “ through Him that strengtheneth him.”

Plato’s opinion also of suicide in the case of incurable sickness may be collected
 from the following passage in his Republic, Book III. “ Herodicus (says he)
 “ who was an instructor of youth in their bodily exercises, and also a valetu-
 “ dinarian, mingled the study of physic with his gymnastic employment; by
 “ which means he first and chiefly tormented himself, and afterwards many
 “ others with a languid and wearisome kind of life. “ How so?”—because
 “ by these means he experienced a long and tedious process of dying. For by
 “ paying great attention to a disorder, which was mortal and out of his power
 “ to eradicate, and by employing himself much in the study of physic, he
 “ omitted at length all other duties, and wore away a wearisome life in such an
 “ indulgence of the body, that he was disordered, whenever he departed in the
 “ least from his stated regimen: and thus by his acquired skill in medicine, he
 “ protracted a feeble and useless life to old age. “ He gained thus an excellent
 “ reward of his skill.”—Such an one truly, as was worthy of him, who could
 “ be ignorant, that Æsculapius revealed not this method of healing to posterity,
 “ because he was either ignorant of or unskilled in it; but because this great
 “ inventor of medicine knew, that in every well-regulated state every one has
 “ his proper duty and business to perform, and that no one is so much at
 “ leisure, as to be able (being a valetudinarian) to spend his whole life in taking
 “ care

care of his body. This point we see observed by mechanics, but neglected by the rich and fortunate. "How so?"—If a common mechanic be disordered in his health, he applies to his physician for some "speedy" method of cure; but if he begin to put him under courses and regimens, he quickly replies, that he has no time to be sick, and that his life is of no use to him, if he must be so cautious and circumspect and must not follow his daily work. So bidding farewell to his doctor, he returns to his usual food and mode of living. If he get well, he follows his employment; but if his bodily strength sink under the disorder, there is an end of his life and labour at once. And this is the use of medicine to an artificer (viz. to effect a speedy cure or none at all). Wherefore I said, that a man had his proper office to perform in life, from which if prevented (by sickness) it was not worth his while to live." It is true that Plato in this passage does not directly affirm, that a man under an incurable disorder ought to kill himself, both for his own sake and because he is become an useless member of society; but he speaks in a manner not insignificant of his approbation; since he concludes, that a man, who is always obliged to attend to the infirmities of the body, is not only punishing himself by a lingering kind of death, but at the same time necessarily neglecting the duties of a citizen. But in this case also, what might be specious reasoning in an Heathen, totally changes its nature under the enlightened morality of a Christian; as has been shown in its proper place. It has not then without reason been asserted, that Plato has much enlarged the grounds of suicide; and that he seems chiefly to have made it an offence against self and the state, without much consideration of its being an infringement of the divine authority.

There lived, in a period greatly subsequent to the age of Plato himself, a sect of philosophers, who were fond of being distinguished by the title of the "New Platonists." The opinions of these (though of so much later a date than the sages now immediately under review) yet shall be mentioned here, in order to bring all that regards the Platonic idea of suicide into one point of view. About the close of the second Christian century a sect of philosophers arose in the school of Alexandria, whose doctrines spreading apace soon seemed to swallow up those of most others. Indeed its comprehensive principles were insinuating and might serve to engage the liberal-minded of all parties in their favour; since its professors only held forth a search after truth and an adopting

out of every other system of philosophy, whatever appeared to be truly eligible. Hence one of the names of this new sect was that of the "Eclectics." But as they discovered upon the whole much more rational and sublime notions of the Deity and of things invisible in the works of Plato than in those of any other ancient sage, they delighted rather in the name of the "New Platonists." They attempted also to reconcile all philosophic differences of opinion, by maintaining that the chief assertions of all the ancients were radically the same, when divested of their clouds of obscurity and reduced to their fundamental principles. Had they proceeded with due care and caution in the former part of their work (in selecting what was eligible in every sect) they would have deserved highly of learning and philosophy; but they abandoned physical and moral reasoning for abstruse speculation, and built an heavy superstructure of their own on the rational and solid foundation of their favourite Plato and others. But as to the latter point (the reconciliation of jarring opinions) they brought together such an heterogeneous mixture of truth and falsehood, of sense and absurdity, as served but to show the weakness of their attempt: and at length they became so deeply enveloped in metaphysical subtilities, as to produce little else but mysterious jargon. But we must not deviate too wide of our subject. Much of Socrates's and Plato's moral reasoning tended to prove, "that philosophy was to be esteemed a continual exercise of dying [P]:" by which was meant, that moral subjugation of the bodily appetites and passions, which might be defined to be their virtual dissolution or death [Q]. This moral purification or death of the passions was to be more strictly accomplished, because the

[P] *Tota philosophorum vita commentatio mortis est.*—Cic. Tusc. I, 30.

[Q] This philosophic death or detachment of the soul from the concerns of the body for the purposes of meditation, was carried to an enthusiastic height by some, and even confounded with the death natural. We read of one Cleombrotus of Ambracia in Epirus, who, on reading Plato's Discourses on the soul and its proper pursuits, though a favourite of fortune in every respect, immediately flung himself from a precipice into the sea, mistaking the recommendation of a philosophic for a natural death.—(See Cic. Tusc. Disp. I, 34. Verburgii, and the places there quoted.)

Pliny also, (as he is interpreted by Cudworth, in *Intell. System*, Vol. II. B. I. c. v.) seems to have mistaken this philosophic death for an hypochondriacal or atrabilarian disorder, "*Est etiam quidam morbus per sapientiam mori;*" and Aristotle (as quoted in Cic. Tusc. I, 33.) says, "All ingenious men or men of wisdom are hypochondriacal." Such indeed may easily be the "effects" of carrying this philosophic death or detachment from the body's concerns to too great an excess.

soul

soul was in general supposed to be received into a purer or grosser vehicle [R] on its separation from the earthly body, according to the degree of its detachment from corporeal matters at the time of its disunion.—Now on these Pythagorean and Platonic mysteries concerning the state and condition of the human soul after death, (viz. that according to its moral disposition at the moment of departure from the human body, it would find a cognate and suitable body correspondently pure or impure, gross or ethereal) “Plotinus” has formed his censures [s] of suicide. “Let no one (says he) detrude his soul from his body “through violence, lest perchance on its exit carrying some of its corporeal “particles along with it, it emigrate into no better a place than it left; since “in its emigration it only passes from one place to another. But one must “wait till the whole body has failed from or left the soul; in which case the “soul will need no transmigration, being entirely without or freed from the “body. “But how (it may be asked) can the body be said to leave the soul?”— “When for instance the soul is no longer bound forcibly to the body, that “harmonious conjunction of parts being destroyed by which the body retained “its soul. “What then (it may be further argued) if any one do his endeavour to disunite his body from his soul?”—The acting thus implies violence; “nor will the body then dismiss the soul, but the soul will forsake the body. “Besides, when a person thus hastily disunites his body and soul, he cannot be “free from some corporeal passion; but he is urged on either by want or pain “or resentment, which ought not to be the case at the time [T] of disunion. “But what (it may still be urged) if a person shall perceive madness coming “on, what shall he do?”—This perhaps will not happen to a good man; but “if it should, it must be reckoned among the number of “Necessities [v],” “not to be chosen for their own sakes, but on account of attendant circum-

[R] See Cudworth, Vol. II. p. 792, &c. for a fuller account of this matter.

[s] This profound philosopher, who was a great bulwark of the new Platonism, flourished about the middle of the third century, and caused a wonderful increase of that sect; which was now diffused from the Alexandrian school in Egypt over various parts. Plotinus first taught publicly in Persia, then at Rome, and was succeeded in the philosophic chair by Porphyry.—See PLOTINUS, Lib. IX. Ennead 1. “Of the Eduction of the Soul.”

[T] For then the soul would be stained in its exit with corporeal passions.

[v] Meaning perhaps, that it may be preferable in such a case to despatch himself rather than run the hazard of doing mischief to others.

stances. But the invention of poisons compelling the soul to retire, is not for the benefit of the soul. And although a period of fate is assigned to every one, yet that cannot be hastened to advantage, unless (as we said before) a necessity is imposed on us. If lastly in whatsoever condition (or degree of purity or impurity) the soul makes its exit from the body, it retains the same in its separate state, it is not to be dragged out by force, as long as there is a possibility of its improvement here." Thus Plotinus argues on the general inexpediency of suicide.

These sentiments were embraced and confirmed both in theory and practice by a remarkable scholar of Plotinus, the famous "Porphry;" who at one time of his life would have committed suicide, but for the influence and persuasions of his old master and friend, who drew him aside from his frantic purpose. Porphry was so afflicted with an atrabilious disorder, that he determined to make away with himself. Hear his own account of the matter in his life of Plotinus. "I once thought (says he) to kill myself; of which Plotinus having gotten a wonderful presentiment, was instantly with me, as I was walking in my house, and said, "that inclination and purpose of mine was by no means an indication of a sound mind, but rather of one under the weight and pressure of black bile." He bade me instantly leave Rome for the benefit of air and exercise. I obeyed and went into Sicily to an excellent friend, who was then at Lilybæum. Thus he prevented the execution of my purpose; but my absence was the occasion of my never seeing him more, as he died before my return." A seeming contradiction of opinion and practice is not always wonderful. A distempered mind (like Porphry's), under the depression of its disorder, may easily forget the principles of its own philosophy and sounder judgment; and in the hour of cool reason may determine on the inexpediency and impropriety of that very action it was about to commit. Thus would Porphry have acted, and yet thus does he argue against the practice of suicide on the same grounds with his great master Plotinus. "No one (says he), who gives his mind to philosophy, will free himself from his terrestrial chains by violence; for if he do this, his soul will remain in the same situation from which it was compelled to depart; that is, its state or condition, when thus violently separated from the body, will be no better than when in the body." (Porph. De Abstinencia, Lib. I.) Again; "a wicked

“ wicked soul not guided by reason, which has been forcibly detruded from the
 “ body, and the souls of such men, as have perished by a violent death, are
 “ still detained about the body, and hover round it; as an Egyptian has shown
 “ us, drawing his reason from the intimate secrets of nature and confirming it
 “ by experience. Wherefore it ought to serve as a prohibition to mankind,
 “ that no one drive himself violently out of life.” (De Abst. Lib. II.) This
 philosopher treats at large, in his books of Abstinence, of the philosophic death,
 as distinct from the natural; and of the abstinence and temperance requisite to
 be exercised in order to procure it: but he strictly cautions his readers, not to
 endeavour to break the bonds of natural union between soul and body by any
 violent means, it being highly injurious to the true interests of the soul to act
 thus. “ The soul (says he in his Sentences) is bound to the body, when it turns
 “ or applies itself to the passions of the body, and again is loosed from the
 “ body, when it is in a state of apathy towards corporeal appetites. What
 “ nature has bound, nature also releases; and what the soul has bound, that
 “ she also releases. Now nature has bound the body to the soul, but the soul
 “ binds or enslaves herself to the body. Nature therefore releases the body
 “ from the soul, but the soul releases itself from the body. Death therefore is
 “ twofold; one kind well known to all, when the body is loosed (by nature)
 “ from the soul; the other is that of philosophers, when the soul is loosed (or
 “ releases itself by abstraction) from the body; but one of these kinds of death
 “ is not always accompanied by the other.” Meaning, that neither the phi-
 losophic death need bring on the natural, nor the natural, the philosophic;
 since we may live, though dead to our passions, or die, when under too great
 an influence of (that is, alive to) terrene affections and appetites. Thus far
 concerns the abstract opinions of Plotinus and Porphyry in condemnation of
 self-murder.

About the end of the fourth century lived Macrobius; who, in his Com-
 mentary on Tully’s “ Dream of Scipio,” adopts the ideas of the new Platonists
 on suicide, and on the same metaphysical grounds. He enters into a full ex-
 planation of the philosophic death, which according to the sentiments of both
 old and new Platonists, all wise men ought to accomplish on themselves; and
 he almost transcribes from Plotinus and Porphyry, what they advance on the
 nature of the soul and its eduction from the body; and on the consequent inex-
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pediency and impropriety of suicide. He adds moreover some illustrations and explanations of his own, to set the abstruse notions of Plotinus in a somewhat clearer light; and he seems to be himself upon the whole a warm oppugner of all manner of suicide.

There was however (somewhat later) another philosopher of the same school, who interpreted the sentiments of his old and new masters the Platonists in a laxer manner: and this [x] was "Olympiodorus." Though he approves of their general arguments dissuasive of suicide, yet he thinks it may sometimes be lawfully committed even on the authority of Socrates himself, as well as of Plato and Plotinus. "Perhaps," says Socrates in the *Phædo*, a philosopher "will not offer violence to himself." Now from this "perhaps" (*ίσως*) Olympiodorus argues, "that a doubt existed in Socrates's own mind, whether suicide were legal or not?" But this is setting up the dubious interpretation of a little particle against the whole strength of his subsequent reasoning on the subject; which implies "no hesitation" on the part of Socrates, but "a full conviction" of the impiety of suicide. The "perhaps" is only applicable either simply to Evenus himself, or to some other such like would-be philosopher. Again says Socrates, "Philosophers must not despatch themselves, unless God send "them an urgent necessity." This (says Olympiodorus) argues an exception to the unlawfulness of suicide in some cases. It certainly does; and Socrates gives an instance in himself of the "fort" of cases fit to be excepted. Olympiodorus next adverts to the sentiments of Plato; "who (he says) permits "one under a long and incurable disorder, to kill himself; because he is then "become useless in his station; for that every one ought to live to some "useful purpose, or not to live at all." The passage here alluded to has been exhibited above at full length; and it must be agreed to give some colour or pretext to Plato's allowance of suicide in such cases. He subjoins also from Plato the passage in the "Laws" mentioned before, relative to

[x] "The doctrine and sect of the modern Platonists retained as yet (in the fifth century) among the Syrians and Alexandrians, a considerable part of their ancient splendor. Olympiodorus, Hero and other philosophers of the first rank added a lustre to the Alexandrian school.—The modern Platonists expired at the beginning of the sixth century, on the Edict of Justinian prohibiting the teaching of philosophy."—MOSHELM's *Eccles. Hist.* 5th and 6th Cent.

The following account of Olympiodorus's opinions is drawn from the Latin Argument prefixed to the Chapter of Plotinus "Of the Education of the Soul." Lib. IX. Ennead I.

the sacrilegious person, or one under any ungovernable attack of passion, "who ought rather to destroy himself than go on in his wickedness." Plato seems certainly to allow a degree of permission in this case also. Olympiodorus then proceeds to comment on Plotinus, who (he says) excepts "impending madness," as a case in which a man is bound to kill himself. Plotinus also says in his Chapter of "Happiness;" "that if an happy man is made a captive, the way is open to his end; otherwise he must live content." On the whole therefore Olympiodorus concludes, "that for the good of one's country, for honesty, for truth's sake, and under extreme poverty (which might otherwise lead to madness or desperate remedies) suicide is lawful, as being the less evil." And perhaps he is justified in drawing such conclusions from the writings of the old Platonists rather than from those of the new sect, as Plato himself in all the passages adduced (and where he writes not in the name of Socrates) speaks more favourably of suicide in certain situations and on more numerous occasions, than do Plotinus or Porphyry, or their interpreter Macrobius. Thus much for the opinions of this great school of philosophy deduced to its latest stage of existence. It is now time to return to the original divisions of the Socratic and Platonic schools, which, after the demise of their great leaders, became disjointed and crumbled into a variety of discordant sects.

The most celebrated of all the disciples of Plato, was the founder of the Peripatetic school—the famous Aristotle; who in his Book of Ethics (Lib. V.) argues to this purport on the subject of self-murder. "From what has been said it appears, whether a man can be said to do an injury, or to be unjust to himself or not? For what being consistent with every virtue is appointed by law, that is to be reckoned among the rules [y] of justice. For instance, the law never commands a man to kill himself; but what it does not command, it forbids. Moreover when any one hurts another contrary to law, having received no previous injury from him, he voluntarily commits an injury against

[y] Taylor's comment on this passage (*Ductor Dubitantium*, B. III. c. ii.) is as follows. "Those things which the Decrees have appointed agreeable to virtue, those are to go for laws. As for example; the law does not command any one to kill himself; and because the law does not command, therefore it does forbid." That is, because the law commands no man (even though he be condemned) to kill himself, therefore the law forbids him to do it to himself. The law will not make a man executioner upon himself even of "her" sentence; therefore she permits him not to execute his own."

"that

“ that man, and he performs a voluntary act of injustice, who does it knowing
 “ to whom and how he does it. Now when any one, impelled by anger or
 “ repentment, kills himself, he does this voluntarily against right law, because
 “ the law does not permit it; he therefore does an injury. But to whom?—
 “ rather to the state than to himself; because he voluntarily suffered, and no
 “ one can be said to be injuriously treated who willingly submits. Wherefore
 “ the state fines the suicide in his property, and treats him (that is, his memory)
 “ with ignominy [z], because he has injured the state.” Thus Aristotle makes
 it an offence against the state alone, excluding its being injurious to self, and
 making no mention [A] of divine authority. Again he says (Eth. Lib. III. xi.)
 “ To die only in order to avoid poverty, or love, or uneasiness of any kind, is
 “ not the character of a brave, but rather of a servile spirit. For it is the part
 “ of an effeminate mind to fly from calamitous and laborious situations. Such
 “ an one endures death, not for the sake of what is honourable, but merely to
 “ avoid an evil.” Hence it appears, that Aristotle ranks under timidity and
 effeminacy of mind the suicide, which proceeds from adverse fortune or conflicts
 of labour and pain; and consequently seems to annihilate in a great measure
 the distinctions set up by Plato, and to condemn all such self-murder as proceeds
 from selfish and interested motives.

Another founder of a philosophic sect, the tendency of whose doctrines must
 now come under consideration, was the famous “ Epicurus;” a man as remark-
 able for the self-denial, patience and temperance of his own life, as the general
 herd of those, who have since been called after his name, have been for the
 sensuality, profusion and profligacy of theirs. A tranquillity [B] of life devoid
 of pain constituted that “ Pleasure,” (*ἡδονή*), which Epicurus denominated “ the
 “ chief good.” But to obtain such a tranquillity Epicurus was of opinion re-
 quired more mental exertion, contemplation and philosophy than indulgence in

[z] Andronicus Rhodius explaining this passage says, “ The body was prohibited from sepulture.”—
 See GROTIUS de Jure Belli & Pacis, Lib. II. c. xix.

[A] The reason of this appears in the following passage, Eth. Lib. III. “ Death is of all things
 most formidable. It is the consummation of all: beyond it is neither good nor evil for the dead man
 to expect.”

[B] Summa voluptas est, ut Epicuro placet, nihil dolere.—Cic. de Finibus, Lib. I. II. where
 Torquatus the Epicurean is exhibiting and explaining his master’s doctrine.

sensual

sensual gratifications and gross appetites; since the latter in their natural consequences so often produced disquietude and pain, while the former led to calm, placid and rational [c] enjoyment. Had the world been made up of philosophers, there would have been no great room to have found fault with this "chief good" of Epicurus, thus seasonably qualified in theory, and exemplified by his own self-restraint. But the word "Pleasure" is not only of ambiguous, but dangerous interpretation with the vulgar. Conversant alone with the pleasures of sensation they neither heed nor understand those of reflection. With them the gross appetites of the body are strong and pressing; but the qualities of the mind and decisions of the judgment are weak and unenlightened. The word Pleasure alone, without its circumscribed definition by Epicurus himself and the best of his followers, was eagerly caught at and made to bear an interpretation more congenial to the common frailties and passions of mankind, and instead of signifying such calm and even delights, as would arise from contemplation and temperance, was enlisted under the banners of mere sensual appetites. But even in the best state of Epicurism, indolence and inactivity were deemed the chief promoters of that intellectual repose and freedom from pain, which constituted their pleasure or chief good of life; which pleasure they deemed in great danger of being disturbed by the cares and perplexities of an active and busy life. The tranquillity of the mind therefore was not to be interrupted by an attention to public offices and employments in the state, or its repose to be endangered even by the anxieties of domestic connexions; from all which the genuine followers of Epicurus were to keep themselves as disengaged as possible. Such being the case, these philosophers in true conceit of their own wisdom arrogantly attributed to their gods the same indolent inclinations, which they found prevalent in themselves. They supposed their deities to inhabit the superior regions, where they spent whole ages in the uninterrupted and tranquil enjoyment of all manner of delights [D], utterly regardless of what was passing

[c] Clamat Epicurus, (is, quem vos nimis voluptatibus esse deditum dicitis) non posse jucundè vivi, nisi sapienter, honestè justèque vivatur: nec sapienter, honestè, justè, nisi jucundè.—CIC. de Fin. Lib. I. 18.

[D] Omnis enim per se Divum natura necesse est

Immortali avo summâ cum pace fruatur,

Semota ab nostris rebus sejunctaque longe.

Nam privata dolore omni, privata periculis,

Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri

Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangitur ira.—LUCRETIVS, Lib. I. 57.

Z

below,

below, of man or human affairs. It would have been more consistent of the Epicureans to have denied at once the existence of any gods, than thus to have discarded them (civilly indeed as consulting their ease) from all care over man. But libertinism has in all ages made a World, a God, a Providence suited to its own purpose, and adapted a system of nature conformable to its own irregularity and confusion.

On this account every idea of futurity, as a state of reward and punishment for what passed here below, was totally discarded by the Epicurean philosophers. They had a most confused notion of a future existence, if they allowed of any such existence at all; but indeed the idea of annihilation seems to have been most familiar to them. However strongly therefore Epicurus himself might recommend by precept and practice an exertion of fortitude and forbearance under pain and affliction; however he might maintain, that his "happy man" was bound to find consolation within himself and in the exercise of his mental faculties, without suffering himself to be much affected by "externals;" yet the general inactivity, which his system of philosophy and divinity recommends, must naturally work in the bulk of his followers a subversion of that very fortitude he wishes to promote. For exertions against sinking under pain and evil are best encouraged by an uniform habit of vigour and activity, buoyed up at the same time by the hopes of future alleviations and perchance rewards of some sort or other, for the striving against or patient endurance of present misery. Now this contradiction between the advice of Epicurus and the natural tendency of his doctrines, necessarily presents itself under our best ideas of Epicurean pleasure, as confined to mental satisfaction. But when this word becomes more lax in its interpretation, (as it soon must when conjoined with the utter exclusion of all vigorous exertion here or prospects hereafter [E],) no wonder that the principle of suicide should be generally acknowledged, and its practice become rife, whenever the evils of life pressed sore without prospect of relief. It is true the Epicurean must of all men be most desirous of life, because he places all his happiness, nay all his existence of any sort in "living here." But

[E] See Lucretius's high encomium on Epicurus, as the first philosopher, who patronised Pleasure, and who dared to release men from all fears of futurity. The arguments and illustrations, which this poet uses to show, that the soul is a part of the body and dies with it, are artful and dangerous (though flimsy and sophistical) to a voluptuary and sensualist: and where once allowed, not only the lawfulness, but the propriety and expediency of suicide in many cases follows of course. How much is it to be lamented, that a man of Lucretius's poetic talents should have employed them in no better a cause!

then if ever he becomes so hard pressed by bodily infirmities that are deemed incurable, or by mental troubles without hope of alleviation; inasmuch that he begins to feel his life an intolerable burden to him, no argument can be urged on his principles to impede his immediate flight from such irremediable evils: on the contrary they all conspire to approve and urge his rushing into annihilation to be rid of living misery. The remedy to one of such principles is both natural and effectual; and the reason of its efficacy is regularly to be deduced from the very principles themselves. The Epicurean lives for pleasure alone; but pleasure is irretrievably gone from him here, and he has no fears or hopes concerning futurity. It could only therefore be the want of a little practical resolution, which could hinder an Epicurean of old from flying to suicide as his refuge from extreme pain and [F] sorrow.

[F] When Seneca therefore tells us (*De Vita beatâ*) "that upon Diodorus the Epicurean's cutting his throat, it was denied to be done according to the decree or doctrine of Epicurus; and that some termed it madness, others temerity"—the reason why it was thought contrary to the tenets of that philosophy was, because Diodorus was at that time "happy" (as he confesses himself) in the enjoyment of all Epicurean pleasures; and therefore he acted injuriously to himself in thus abruptly quitting that pleasure, which he might have continued to experience.

Several passages are to be found in Tully describing the sentiments of Epicurus with respect to suicide.—"It seems good to me, that the same rule should obtain with regard to the preservation of life, as is in use among the Greeks in their entertainments—"Either drink or be gone"—and this is justly said. For either let a person enjoy equally with the rest of the company the pleasures of drinking, or that he may prevent the violence and madness of the inebriated from falling on his sober pate, let him depart beforehand. And thus with respect to the injuries of fortune; if too severe to be borne, you may fly away and leave them. This has Epicurus said in so many words," (*Tusc. Disp. V. 41.*)

Again: "The Epicurean wife man must always be happy. His desires are bounded; he despises death; he thinks truly of the immortal gods without fear; and he hesitates not, whenever it seems better for him to depart out of life." (*De Fin. I. 19.*)

Again: "Let them take the Epicurean antidotes of pain as out of a medicine-chest; "that if pain be severe, it will be short; if long, light." But if it should prove tedious, let him die, (says Epicurus) that is, kill himself." To which Cicero adds, "perhaps that would be best."—(*De Fin. Lib. II. 7. and 28, &c.*)

Epicurus's sophism concerning death was, "Death the most dreaded of all evils is nothing to us; for while we are present, death is absent, and when death comes, we are gone." (See *Drog. LAERT. in vitam Epicuri*, and *Cic. Tusc. Disp. V. 31.*)

Epicurus himself suffered long and excruciating pains from an internal disorder, which at length terminated in his natural death, after a wonderful deal of patience on his part. If he therefore actually recommended suicide to others (a point perhaps doubtful, though his doctrines certainly do in their consequences) he did not practise it on himself.

C H A P. IV.

Encomiums on the Stoical Philosophy; yet inferior to the Socratic.—Suicide a favourite doctrine of the Stoics.—Zeno and Cleanthes both killed themselves.—The stoical wise man; suicide to be his deliverance from all embarrassment.—Contradiction of this practice with their notion of externals.—To be accomplished at some moment that would exalt the personal dignity of character.—Much written in favour of suicide by the Stoics; but they deal more in assertion than argument.—In the act of self-murder they never looked beyond themselves.—Some of the most admired names of antiquity professed the stoical philosophy; such as Cato, Seneca, Epictetus, Antoninus.—Stoical doctrine of suicide as advanced by Cato, and exemplified in his practice.—Strictures on Cato's death; his exalted character; consistency of his death with his previous life.—Comparison between Cato and Socrates in the circumstances of their deaths.—Seneca the most copious writer of antiquity in favour of suicide.—He makes a Stoic's indifference to living or dying the ground-work of suicide: makes not a proper distinction between an unreasonable fear of death and an utter contempt of life: lays much stress on the "facility" with which we may accomplish our deaths, as an argument of permission to do it.—Seneca's opinion of suicide in old age and under infirmities.—Instances of Seneca's yielding practically to domestic arguments against suicide.—Reflections on the same.—Some general arguments of Seneca in favour of the practice.—Answers.—Reasons of thus entering at large on the trifling arguments of Seneca.—Seneca a great imitator of Socrates in the circumstances of his accelerated death.—Epictetus.—His allowance of suicide much more contracted than that of Seneca: his maxim seems to be, "either be contented or depart; but do not live in a state of murmuring."—Passages selected from his writings, and observations upon them.—Some excellent lessons of resignation, &c. very repugnant to the spirit of suicide in general; but especially for the sake of mere personal dignity.—Epictetus, though by profession a Stoic, was a searcher after truth in every sect of philosophy.—He approved of suicide in very few cases, being of opinion that we ought to wait the order of the Deity for our departure; which

order it was not easy to discover.—Comparison of Seneca and Epictetus.—The Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus; the last of the Stoics: his exalted character: speaks very sparingly in favour of suicide, and with no hearty concurrence.—Passages produced and reflections upon them.—Antoninus's (as well as Epictetus's) real sentiments seem to require a submission to the heaviest afflictions without recourse to suicide.—Summary of the Stoical doctrine of suicide, as collected from the sentiments of the above great men; who all however differed with regard to their signals of dismissal, some making them easy to be discerned and others scarce at all.—Modern suicides can build nothing on Stoical errors till they first imitate Stoical virtues.

THE rational and practical philosophy of Socrates, which taught a submission to the will of the supreme Deity, a belief in Providence and in the immortality of the soul; and which consequently always considered a voluntary suicide as an infringement of the divine authority;—this excellent system of speculation and morals was gradually crumbled into a variety of discordant sects, among whom the Stoics or followers of Zeno held a distinguished rank. It is not our business here to enlarge on the general maxims of this famous sect, of which the celebrated author of the “Spirit of Laws” thus writes: “If I could cease but for a moment to think that I am a Christian, I could not help reckoning the destruction of the sect of Zeno, among the misfortunes, which have befallen mankind. They carried nothing to excess, but what served to elevate the mind of man, by teaching him to despise both pain and pleasure. The Stoics alone knew how to form good citizens or great men.” (B. XXIV.) But this illustrious writer seems to have suffered his usual judgment to have been absorbed in the vortex of stoical enthusiasm. That the Stoics “alone” knew how to form good citizens seems to be forgetting, that a Socrates ever lived and taught: Let us hear our own excellent and learned countrywoman [G] on this point. “Stoicism is indeed in many points inferior to the doctrine of Socrates; which latter did “not” teach, that all externals were indifferent; which “did” teach a future state of recompence, and agreeably to that “forbad” suicide [H].”

[G] See the Introduction to Mrs. Carter's Epictetus.

[H] Seneca says (Ep. civ.) Alter (Socrates) te docebit mori, si necesse erit, alter (Zeno) antequam necesse erit.

The tenets [1] of the Stoics, when rigorously interpreted, contained a wonderful mixture of wisdom and absurdity, of sound sense and contradiction of principles. The practice of suicide (it is well known) was a favourite one and held in high esteem among them; to increase the reputation of which Zeno himself and his immediate successor Cleanthes contributed not a little by their own voluntary deaths [κ]. But this approbation of self-murder by the Stoics, was a consequence of the worst part of their philosophy, as it arose from their encouragement of personal pride and apathy. It manifestly contradicted one of their chief doctrines or principles, that of living "agreeably to nature;" whose first injunction or insinuation is (as the Stoics themselves [L] allow) "the preserving oneself." But they allotted to their "wise man" a character to support through life, which was utterly incompatible with the common infirmities and frailties of human nature. He was never to err in judgment, and therefore never to change his opinion. He was to consider pain as no evil, all externals, (as being without the mind) as matters of perfect indifference, and crimes as all equal; being the least of them deviations from right reason or the perfection of the soul. Whenever therefore a Stoic met with any fore pressure of mind or body, which, notwithstanding all his boasted firmness and constancy, "would" force itself into notice; whenever he could no longer support [M] the same rank

[1] Rational Stoicism is thus briefly and comprehensively described by Tacitus (Hist. IV.) speaking of Helvidius Priscus. "Doctores sapientie secutus est, qui sola bona, quæ honesta, mala tantum, quæ turpia: potentiam, nobilitatem, cæteraque extra animum neque bonis neque malis adnumerant." Such notions as these are worthy of all praise.

[κ] The cause of Zeno's suicide is recorded to have been as follows. As he was going out of his school one day at the age of ninety-eight, he fell down, put a finger out of joint, went home and hanged himself. Cleanthes also, the successor of Zeno in the Stoical school, followed the example of his master in philosophy, by shortening the period of his life in the following manner. After having used abstinence for two days on the advice of his physician, to get the better of an indisposition; though the disorder was hereby removed, and leave given him to resume his former diet, he refused all sustenance, saying, "that as he was now got so far on his journey towards death, he would not retreat;" and he accordingly starved himself entirely. (See DIOG. LAËRTIUS.)

[L] Zeno in his Book "Of the Nature of Man" first said, "that the end of man was to live "agreeably to nature." Again; Zeno and Cleanthes say, "that this is the first appetite or instinct of "nature in every animal—"to preserve itself;" nature from the beginning reconciling us to ourselves."—See DIOG. LAËRT. in Life of Zeno.

[M] Ubi non sis qui fueris, non est cur velis vivere, (says Cicero, Ep. ad Fam. VII. 3.) on Stoical grounds,

"Dignitas sine vitâ quam vita sine dignitate," was the true maxim of the Stoics,

and

and consequence in life, which he had hitherto maintained; ashamed to be overcome, or to acknowledge a weakness, he preached up suicide, as a refuge, or honourable deliverance from all embarrassment. "A wise man (says Diogenes Laertius in his life of Zeno, where he is delivering Stoical doctrines) will quit life, when oppressed with very severe pain, or when deprived of any of his senses, or when labouring under desperate diseases."—But the absurdity is glaring, that those very philosophers, who maintained that pain and the sufferings of the body were no evils, should yet allow it to be both innocent and commendable, to fly from those sufferings by a deprivation of life itself. They pretended indeed, "that pain was a signal from God to abandon life." But if it were a matter of indifference or no evil, how could it be deemed a signal for quitting life?—or if allowed by them to be an evil when in the extremity sufficient to countenance and render suicide lawful—how will they avoid yielding their assent to a proportionable share of evil in its smaller degrees? Their principles therefore and their practice were in this instance totally contradictory. [N]

But having once established this principle of self-murder, as an useful expedient in certain situations, the Stoics refined on its practice in a manner peculiar to themselves. They determined life or death to be mere Externals, and in consequence, to be matters of perfect indifference to their wise man, when stripped of concomitant circumstances. From whence they concluded, that it was not only lawful, but many times a duty incumbent on him, not to wait for death like common men, but to anticipate its natural approach, by seizing some favourable or seasonable moment of a voluntary departure, which might reflect fresh lustre on the dignity of the stoical character. When such a period seemed to be arrived, it was regarded, not only as a leave, but an order from the Deity, to retire; and no considerations whatever from without, not even his own prof-

[N] "It is remarkable, that no sect of philosophers ever so dogmatically prescribed or so frequently committed suicide, as those very Stoics, who taught, that the pains and sufferings, which they strove to end by this act of rebellion against the decrees of Providence, were no evils. How absolutely this horrid practice contradicted all their noble precepts of resignation and submission to the divine will, is too evident to need any enlargement. They professed indeed in suicide to follow the divine will, but this was a lamentably weak pretence. Even supposing sufferings to be evils, they are no proof of a signal from God to abandon life, but to show an exemplary patience which he will reward: but supposing them, as the Stoics did, not to be evils, they afford not so much as the shadow of a proof."—See Mrs. CARTER'S Introduction to Epictetus, where is more to the same purpose.

perity

perity and happiness at the moment, were to obstruct the deadly blow. Thus as his own personal dignity influenced all the actions of a Stoic through life, so did it equally prevail over his last moments to the accomplishment of his own death. "It is not without reason asserted (says Diog. Laertius in his life of Zeno), that "the stoical wise man is ever ready to die for his country or his friends:"—but in so doing he is sure to exalt his own dignity of character. More has been written in favour of suicide by the Stoics than by any other sect of ancient philosophers, and yet there is little or no argument to be found among them. Their general assertion is, "that a wise man will never look upon death as an evil;—that he "will despise it and be ready to undergo it at any time." But this is no defence or apology for suicide. It is only confounding matters of a very different nature, which the more judicious Socrates well defined and distinguished from each other, when he remarked, "that though a philosopher might often wish to die, yet "there were substantial reasons, why he should not hasten his own end." Again; when a Stoic was attacked upon his assertion, "that his wise man was always happy;" the usual reply was, "if any one think himself otherwise, the door is "open, he may depart when he pleases; but if he chooses to stay, he can have "no right to complain." Thus did they cut through this Gordian knot, which it would have given other philosophers an infinite deal of pains to have untied. If wife, children or social connexions of any kind were hinted at as just obstacles to suicide, the stoical reply was, "all these things are externals, about which "no wise man ought to concern himself:"—in the act of suicide therefore they considered "Themselves" alone.—

But as some of the most admired characters of antiquity were professors and patrons of this celebrated sect—characters distinguished in their generation, not more for their wisdom and learning than for the strictness of their morals, what they have advanced in their writings in favour of suicide must not be passed over without notice. The opinions of a Cato, a Seneca, an Epictetus, an Antoninus, must be treated with respect, though discussed with freedom. In the third and fourth books of Tully, "On the ends of good and evil," that philosopher holds a conference with Cato, in which the latter unfolds at large the principal doctrines of Zeno and the Stoics. What especially appertains to our subject is to the following purport, though the passage in some parts is veiled in obscurity and stoical paradox. "That there are some offices or duties, which as they concern
 " Externals

“Externals alone, are to be placed in the rank of “Indifferent” things, but
 “yet which may be performed on the score of utility, provided a probable reason
 “can be assigned for their performance. Such offices are a proper subject for
 “our deliberation; and one of them concerns our continuance in life or departure
 “out of it. It is the duty of him, in whom all (or the majority of) things
 “proceed according to nature, to continue in life:—of him, in whom the ma-
 “jority are contrary to nature or likely to prove so, to depart out of life:—and
 “therefore it may fall out to be the duty of a wise man to quit life, though he
 “be happy, and of an unwise one to remain in it though he be miserable. [o]
 “For neither is the possession of virtue alone a sufficient cause to retain any one
 “in life, nor is mere vice or folly sufficient to eject him from it; but life or
 “death is to be determined by certain concomitant circumstances arising from
 “certain offices or duties to be performed. Wherefore the true point of time,
 “in which a wise man should die, is when he can do it opportunely or with
 “dignity to himself, without paying any regard to the length or shortness or
 “his life: since this is to follow the dictates of nature or wisdom itself. [P]”

According to this doctrine of Cato, the Stoic philosopher is only answerable to himself, that is, to his own dignity of character, for his life or death; and we find this illustrious man exemplifying this doctrine in his own practice. [Q]

[o] The wise man of the Stoics could never be otherwise than happy, nor the unwise one than miserable; consequently in their language the wise Stoic could never properly be said to destroy himself, “because” he was unhappy, nor the unwise one be said to live, “because” he was happy: but life was to be quitted in the “seasonable” moment, that is when there was a “credit” to be gained by so doing—and this explains the paradox.

[P] “Hæc sunt (says Liplius on this passage in his *Manuductio ad Stoicam Disciplinam*, L. III. Diff. 22.) germana Stoica, sed obscurius dicta. Lux aliqua a Stobæo (who was a collector of common places and sayings of others, and here quotes Chrysippus) datur, “Aiunt Stoici interdum et exitum e vitâ probis sapientibusque “ex Officio” multimodis convenire, improbis stultisque mansionem in vitâ, etiam si nunquam curæ habituri sint esse sapientes. Neque enim vel virtutem retinere in vitâ vel malitiam ejicere ex eâ; sed ex Officio vel non Officio æstimandam dijudicandamque esse vitam vel mortem.”

[Q] Cæsar’s reply on being told of Cato’s death was reported to be, “Cato, I envy thee thy death, “for thou hast envied me the preservation of thy life.” On which Plutarch remarks, “Had Cato suffered himself to have been preserved by Cæsar, it is likely he would not so much have impaired his own honour, as augmented the other’s clemency and glory.” But Cato’s own idea was, that it was an insupportable instance of Cæsar’s tyranny and usurpation, that he should “pretend” to show clemency in saving their lives over whom he had no legal authority.—See PLUTARCH’S *Life of Cato*.

Too indignant to owe either life or death to the will of a conqueror, or to be of less consequence in the state than he had been ; — too inflexible and unconcerned for “ Externals” to listen to the cries and distresses of his own friends and family, Cato thought the “ seasonable” moment was arrived, in which he could quit the world with most [s] glory to himself, and he embraced it accordingly. But should he not rather have considered, that whatever personal fame he might acquire by this contempt of his own life, he must gain it by renouncing the concerns and interests of his country, when she stood most in need of his example and assistance ; by forsaking his dependants, friends and family, when they most required his advice, protection and presence ? The character, which Cato supported through life, was wonderfully great, and his name seems to have been repeated with rapture by the writers of those times. “ His glory (says one) can neither “ be increased by flattery nor lessened by detraction.” “ He was one, who “ chose “ to be” rather than “ to appear” good,” says another : — and a third — “ He was the very image of virtue, and in all points of disposition more like the “ Gods than men. He never did right, that he might seem to do right, but “ because he could not do otherwise. That only seemed to him to be reasonable “ which was just. Free from all human vices, he was superior to the vicissitudes

[s] “ Thou exhibitest a noble lesson to mankind, how much superior in the estimation of honest “ men is dignity without life to life without dignity ! ” says Val. Maximus on the self-murder of Cato L. III. C. ii. “ He died (says Seneca, Ep. xxiv.) that no man might either have power to kill or opportunity to save Cato.” “ Thou hast done nothing, O fortune, (says Cato, as Seneca reports of “ him in the same epistle) in thus opposing all my undertakings. I have hitherto fought, not for my “ own, but my country’s liberty ; nor have I acted with so much firmness in order to live free myself “ (which no one could prevent), but to live among free men. Now since affairs are arrived at the “ point of desperation, Cato must retire into a place of safety.”—Again, Seneca says, (De Providentia, C. ii.) “ Behold a spectacle on which the Deity may gaze with attention — a brave man combating “ adversity ! I do not see what Jupiter has on earth more illustrious to behold than—a Cato. Must not “ the Gods hail with pleasure the return of their favourite to them, who has escaped from earth by so “ memorable and laudable an exit ? Death consecrates those, whose end even they, who fear to imitate it, must commend.” In reply to these high encomiums it may be observed, that a good man struggling against adversity is a truly noble fight. But how can he be said to struggle against it, who evades and flies from it by a voluntary death ? The spectacle worthy of God in Cato was rather his untainted integrity through life ; to maintain which, in so corrupt an age, must have been an hard struggle indeed ! but by his death he gave up the contest.

“ of fortune.” [T] In short he seems to have been represented as an instance to what an height of virtue, resolution and constancy the knowledge and practice of philosophy could exalt the human mind. But let it be remembered, that it was human or unenlightened philosophy alone, which guided a Cato’s steps, as through life so also in its awful close. His principals of stoicism would naturally lead him to rejoice in such [u] an opportunity of dying; and he therefore gladly seized the occasion that was offered him of fulfilling his own maxims. To have died in any less distinguished manner might not have become the firmness of a Cato; — to have died as he did, would have been ridiculous and absurd in most others. As his conduct therefore through life gave a lustre to his death, so did he by his death consistently wind up the austerity of his life. Conscious of this consistency between the scenes of life and death, and that all men were not born to be practical Stoics, Cato recommends not to his son or his dependents in Utica to follow his own example, but rather to throw themselves on the mercy of the [w] conqueror.

[T] Cujus gloriæ nec profuit quisquam laudando, nec vituperando quisquam nocuit. (Livy, Fragments. Alluding to Cicero and Cæsar, quorum alter laudes, alter vituperationes Catonis scripsit.) Esse quàm videri bonus. (Sallust, of Cato.)

Homo virtuti similis; et per omnia ingenio Diis quàm hominibus propior! Qui nunquam recte fecit, ut facere videretur, sed quia aliter facere non poterat; cuique id solum visum est rationem habere, quod haberet justitiam; omnibus humanis vitiis immunis, semper fortunam in suâ potestate habuit. VELLEIUS PATERCULUS, L. II. 35. speaking of Cato.

The Poets likewise have not been sparing in praise of Cato.

Quis * justius induit arma
Scire nefas; magno se judice quisque tuetur;
Victrix causa Deis placuit, sed victa Catoni. — LUCAN, Lib. I.
Et cuncta terrarum subacta
Præter + atrocem animum Catonis. — HOR. L. II. Od. I.
Secretoque pios, his dantem † jura Catonem. — VIRG. Æn. VIII. 670.
— habeat jam Roma pudorem,
Tertius e cælo cecidit Cato. — JUV. II. 40.

[u] Cato sic abiit e vitâ ut causam moriendi noctam se esse gauderet. — Tusc. I. 30.

[w] Non enim aliâ in causâ M. Cato fuit, aliâ cæteri, qui se in Africâ Cæsari tradiderunt; atqui cæteris forsitan vitio datum esset, si se interemissent; propterea quod eorum vita lenior et mores fuerant faciliores.

* Cæsar aut Pompeius.

+ the inflexible spirit of Cato.

† Some suppose this meant of Cato the elder; but the mention of Cataline in the same period seems rather to affix the compliment to Cato the younger.

Yet notwithstanding all this seeming magnanimity in the voluntary death of a Cato, we must not suffer it to eclipse in our opinion the milder, but not less bright and becoming lustre of Socrates's behaviour during his last moments. If an awful respect, when reasoning on stoical grounds, be due to the stern resolution of the one, under the circumstances of that death he so ferociously sought, no less admiration and love must be bestowed on the gentleness and composure, the sweet serenity and resignation with which the other met his accelerated fate. A Cato tearing out his own bowels with his own hands, after the point of his sword was not found to have done its duty, must have exhibited a scene of disgust and horror; whereas the mildness of a Socrates, when about to swallow his deadly potion, must have been a sight most instructive of patience and complacency in the midst of cruel and unjust persecution. The one died to avoid the sight of him, whom he called a tyrant; the other refused to make his escape from prison, out of respect to those laws, which had been tyrannically enforced against himself. The one hastened his own death to exalt his own personal dignity; the other submitted to drink the poison rather than renounce his philosophy and his God. The one was forced to conceal his horrid purpose from his dearest friends, as knowing they could not approve his design; the other argued openly on the propriety of submission to his fate. The one was content to read that noble conversation in solitude and silence, which the other held in public at the time of his death to console his sorrowing friends. The slave of Cato, through great love of his master, tremblingly delayed awhile to bring [x] back his sword; and the messenger, who was compelled to offer the hemlock-draught to Socrates, feeling a backwardness to execute the commission, turned away his face and fell a-weeping: but the apathy of the Stoic prompted him to strike his slave so violent a blow, as materially injured his own hand; while the mild affections and benevolence of Socrates led him instantly to observe to the surrounding company, "see the good heart of this man, how he weeps for me!" The sweet composure of the soul of Socrates was wonderfully manifested in the trifling circumstance of rubbing his leg after pulling off the fetter, and observing with a smile,

faciliores. Catoni autem cum incredibilem tribuisset natura gravitatem, eamque ipse perpetuâ constantiâ roborasset, semperque in proposito susceptoque consilio permanisset, moriendum potius quam tyranni vultus aspiciendum fuit.—CIC. DE OFF. Lib. I. 31.

[x] Cato's sword had been privately conveyed away by his son and friends, on suspicion of the use he intended to make of it.

“ how

“how pain and pleasure were interwoven with each other!”—but the sternness of Cato led him to speak roughly and unfeelingly to his son and friends about him, while their hearts were bleeding in anxious suspense for the fate he seemed to have denounced against himself. In short; the severity of manners exercised by the one, was a perfect contrast to the mild and gentle behaviour of the other both in life and death. “May the Gods (said a philosopher to one, who was lamenting over Socrates’s death) grant me just such another!” A Christian might rejoice in the martyrdom of a Socrates, who would shudder at the self-murder of a Cato. [v]

No philosopher among the Ancients has written more in favour of suicide than the famous Seneca, who has been called the panegyrist of this stoical doctrine. The general foundation on which this writer seems to ground the expediency and lawfulness of suicide is, “that indifference to living or dying, or rather that contempt [z] of life, which ought to actuate the proceedings of the stoical wise man; that there are many sufferings in life worse than death itself; that it is often embraced on the most frivolous occasions; that since neither infants, nor boys, nor lunatics fear death, it is shameful, if “Reason” will not administer that indifference about it, which “Folly” [A]

[v] It may be asked, “how comes it to pass, that the death of Cato should have been at all times held in such veneration, when numberless others despatched themselves on similar occasions, and many even on the same, whose suicide has met with no particular eclat?”—The answer is; that the dignity of Cato’s life stamped a celebrity on the mode of his death; and that the point of time, in which he died, rendered the circumstance of his death remarkable, his voluntary demise being always connected with the expiration of Roman Liberty.—It is worthy observation, that both the rise and the fall of Roman Liberty should be marked by two distinguished instances of self-murder, in the persons of Lucretia and Cato; and it has been principally owing to this circumstance, that the desperate action of these two persons has been held forth to such unlimited admiration.—The lively fallies of Montagne’s imagination are raised to an enthusiastic pitch in celebrating the self-murder of Cato; (Ess. B. II. C. xi.) but the reader, who wishes to see a more rational and dispassionate account of Cato’s true character and probable views in his suicide, may consult “Adams on Self-murder.”—Cato’s views seem to have been much tinged with vain glory and a personal hatred of Cæsar, on whom he wished to cast the odium of his death.

[z] See his Epistles on that contempt of life—“passim.”

[A] Nec infantes, nec pueros, nec mente lapsos, timere mortem; & esse turpissimum, si eam securitatem nobis “Ratio” non præstat, ad quam “Stultitia” perducit.—This curious sophism is very agreeable to the quaintness of Seneca on many points; and is to be found in Ep. xxxvi.

“produces.”

“ produces.” That a wise man should be so far indifferent to life or death, as to proceed in one uniform, steady course of virtue, even though his adherence to it should occasion his death, is what the Christian will cheerfully join with the Stoic in maintaining. But there is an essential difference between a “timid dread of death, and a contempt of life;” between meeting death with resignation, when necessarily imposed on us, and a voluntary defiance or challenge of its [B] approach. This contempt of life then, which is confounded with the fear of death and is so frequently referred to by Seneca, as the ground-work of suicide, has in fact nothing to do with the proof of its expediency or lawfulness, but only may go thus far — “that if it should be lawful on any occasion to put an end to our own lives, then it may be proper to inculcate this high contempt of life, in order to inspire men with the resolution and courage necessary to accomplish the deed.” In this sense then Seneca might well ridicule the effeminacy and timidity of a man, who preferred his prayer [c] to the Gods, “to afflict him in every shape, so life did but remain.”

Seneca seems also to lay much stress on the “facility” with which our death may be compassed, as an argument for its actual accomplishment [D]. “The eternal law (says he) has done nothing better than this, that it has given us only one entrance into life, but a thousand ways of escaping out of it.—Excellent is the condition of human life; since nobody can be miserable but by his own fault. Does life please you? live on. Does it not? go from whence you came.—No vast wound is necessary; a mere puncture will secure your liberty.—It is a bad thing (you say) to be under a necessity of living; but there is no necessity in the case. Why not? because many, short and easy are the paths to deliver you from it. Thank the Gods, nobody can be

[B] Fortium virorum est magis mortem contemnere quam odisse vitam.—Q. CURTIUS, L. V. 9.

[C] Debilem facito manu,
 Debilem pede, coxâ;
 Tuber adtrue gibberum;
 Lubricos quate dentes;
 Vita dum superest, bene est.
 Hanc mihi, vel acutâ
 Si fedeam cruce, sustine.—SEN. Ep. ci.

[D] See Epistles xii. and lxx. and De Irâ, Lib. III.

“compelled

"compelled to live; we spurn at such a necessity.—If the mind be sick, it is its own fault; it may soon put an end to its misery. Do you see that precipice, that river, that well? you will find liberty or freedom from misery at the bottom. Look on that tree;—liberty hangs on its branch; or do you ask, which is the road to liberty? your heart, your throat and every vein in your body.—Every one ought to make his life approved by others, his death by himself. That kind of death is best, which pleases most. If a man can contrive to kill himself easily and without much pain, he ought so to do; but if prevented from this, he must use more ingenious and painful methods. There never can want contrivance to die, where there is inclination [E]. It is most unjust to live by theft, but to steal an opportunity of dying is very becoming and beautiful."—Yet what is all this (and a great deal more of the same kind scattered through his Epistles) to the purpose? That a man "can" die when he pleases, who doubts? but is the consequence unavoidable, that therefore he "may" do so?

The above trifling propositions (for it would be an indignity to the faculty of reasoning to call them arguments) have been adduced to show, how weakly a Philosopher, a Stoic, and a Seneca can argue in favour of suicide! and yet such is the frivolity of his general mode of defending and recommending the practice. Sometimes indeed he rises towards the show of an argument, in which course he shall now be followed. These are his sentiments of suicide when connected with old age or infirmities. "We will give our opinion (says he in Ep. lviii.) whether it behoves us to loathe the extremity of age, and not to wait for, but anticipate

[E] Non deerit ad mortem ingenium, cui non defuerit animus.—Injuriosum est rapto vivere, at contra pulcherrimum mori rapto (Ep. lxx.) This long epistle is almost wholly on the subject of suicide; and he says, "It is not your great men alone, such as Cato, &c. who have adopted these notions and who think thus nobly; but also men of the lowest rank (vilissimæ sortis) have been eager to vindicate themselves to liberty; and being deprived of plain and easy methods of dying, have adopted most painful and extraordinary ones. He is a great man who not only determines to die, but takes pains to effect it, where he is surrounded with preventive difficulties." Seneca mentions a German gladiator, who for want of a better method (of which the vigilance of his keepers deprived him) thrust a dirty stick down his own throat, and thus choked himself. "How bravely (he adds) would such an one have used his sword on a like occasion, if he had worn one!" He mentions another poor slave, who being put into a cart in order to fight with wild beasts, contrived under the appearance of sleep to hang down his head in such a manner between the spokes of the wheel, that he was soon mangled and killed.

"our

“ our end by our own hand? It is a question, whether the extremity of life
 “ ought to be accounted the dregs of life, or the most refined and pure part of
 “ it, provided only the understanding continues unimpaired, the senses entire,
 “ and the body is not become more dead than alive? For the difference is great,
 “ whether a man may be said to prolong his life or his death. But if the body
 “ cannot discharge its offices, why should it not be incumbent on us to liberate
 “ the labouring soul? Nay perhaps this ought to be done rather sooner, lest
 “ when the necessity is actually arrived, there should not remain the opportu-
 “ nity or ability to do it: and when the chance is greater of living ill (that is,
 “ miserably to ourselves) than of dying quickly, it is folly not to secure so ma-
 “ terial a point as the latter at the price of a little life. The lives of some few
 “ persons [r] are protracted to a great length without harm or injury; but
 “ the old age of many is at least totally inert and useless. Why then should it
 “ be judged cruel to shorten the portion of life by putting an end to it? My
 “ determination then is, that I will not relinquish old age, whilst it preserves me
 “ entire to myself—entire I mean in my better part. But when it once begins
 “ to shatter my understanding and to impair my faculties, when it leaves me not
 “ life, but breath only, I will leap in haste out of the rotten and tottering
 “ structure. Neither will I fly from disease by a voluntary death, provided only
 “ it be a curable disease and does not affect the mind: I will not lay violent
 “ hands on myself through mere pain, since thus to die is to be conquered.
 “ But if I know this pain will be my perpetual companion, I will depart, not
 “ for the pain’s sake, but because it will hinder me from performing any duty
 “ of life. He is weak and effeminate, who dies on account of pain; but he is
 “ a fool, who lives only to endure it.”

Could one divest oneself for a moment of the grand doctrines of Christianity,
 viz. humility, patience and submission to divine appointment under the severest
 sufferings, one could not have much to object to the general purport of this
 reasoning, as far as self alone was concerned. But yet to show, how the wisest
 philosopher, when unassisted from above, is apt to contradict and confute him-
 self, some other passages shall be brought forward, in which Seneca himself will
 be found not only introducing, but practically yielding to the force of some
 natural, rational and social arguments of obligation to live even against his own

[r] See the serenity of Bassus Aufidius in his old age finely described in Ep. xxx.

stoical principles of suicide. "Being emaciated (says he, Ep. lxxviii.) to an "high degree by a severe illness, I often rushed on the thoughts of breaking "through life; but was recalled by the old age of a most indulgent father. "For I considered not how resolutely "I" could encounter death, but how "He" could bear up under my loss. Wherefore I laid a command on myself "to live: "for sometimes to live is to act bravely." Being thus determined to live (if he could) for his father's sake, he goes on to mention the remedies that restored him to health, when he had deemed his own case desperate enough to have justified his self-murder. These were chiefly the consolations of philosophy and the affectionate attentions and conversation of his friends:—"these " (says he) spurred me on to assist myself and to endure every torment; were it "not for such comforts as these, it would be most miserable, when you have "cast off all intention of a voluntary death, scarce to have the spirit of life "remaining in you." He then goes on in the same Epistle with some general reflections which make much "against" his own principles of suicide in extreme pain and illness. "Disease (says he) has great torments, but intervals render "these more tolerable; and kind nature has so formed us, as to make our pains "either tolerable or short." He afterwards enters into a discussion of the nature of pain and sickness, in which it would be tedious and unprofitable to follow him: but his conclusion is so pointed in opposition to suicide (though not so intended by himself) that it must not be passed over:—"in the mean time advise "here to this opinion, hold it fast as between your teeth,—neither to yield to "adversity nor to trust to prosperity; but to have the fickleness of Fortune ever "before your eyes; and to believe, that whatever she can do, she will do. "What therefore you have taught yourself to expect [G], will be lighter to "bear." And may it not be justly added on stoical (as well as all other) principles, "that what is thus made lighter to bear can afford no ground for "suicide?"

But we find another remarkable instance in Seneca, where he yielded his stoical principles to the dictates of natural affection and rational judgment; so that though he must certainly be styled the panegyrist of suicide (from having

[G] Interim hoc tene, hoc morde: adversis non succumbere, lætis non credere; omnem fortunæ licentiam in oculis habere, tanquam quicquid potest facere, factura sit. Quicquid expectatum est diu, levius accedit.—Ep. lxxviii.

written so much in its favour) yet he must also be allowed to have strongly denied the influence of his own principles on his practice. "My wife Paulina" (says he, Ep. civ.) recommends it to me to take care of my health: and since I know that her life is wrapped up in mine, I begin to consult for myself. "Wherefore since I cannot obtain of her to love me in a more [H] exalted manner, she obtains of me that I should love myself with more indulgence. "We must gratify these honest affections, and sometimes even though causes press us, we must retain the breath in our bodies, "even to our own torment," for the sake of friends and relations, since a good man ought [I] to live, not only as long as may be pleasant to himself, but necessary to perform his duties. He, who does not esteem his wife or his friend so highly, as to live for their sakes, but perseveres in his dying intentions, is fastidious. For let the mind lay this injunction on itself, that not only if it have formed the wish, but even taken the resolution of dying, to forego it for the advantage and accommodation of friends; since it is becoming a noble mind to return (as it were) into life for the sake of others, as many great men have done. "For this is a point of the greatest humanity, attentively to cherish your old age, when you know that it is pleasant, advantageous and desirable to any of your connexions. Such a circumstance has no small share of comfort and reward in it. For what is more pleasant than to be so dear to a wife, as thereby to become dearer to oneself? Wherefore my Paulina is able, not only "to infuse her own fears into me, but to [K] make me fear for myself."

[H] Meaning, so as to look with more indifference on my health or sickness, as knowing that I can deliver myself from pain whenever I please.

[I] Bono viro vivendum est, non quamdiu juvat, sed quamdiu oportet.—(Ep. civ.)

[K] Paulina afterwards returned him the compliment of his former kindness in a way suited to stoical principles—by determining to die with him, when he was necessitated to put an end to his own life by command of Nero. Their veins were opened precisely at the same moment; but Paulina's life was preserved, whether through her own irresolution, or by order of the emperor, is not very clear.—(See the account at large in Tac. An. L. XV.)

Whatever Seneca might profess to be in his principles of philosophy, he seems to have been but a mongrel Stoic in his practice; since he suffered the calls of natural affection,—the love of a father—of a wife—externals—to prevail so much over him, and to draw him into compliances rather founded on humanity and tenderness than on the reserved dignity and apathy of true stoical wisdom. He was not so rigid as Cato.

Seneca

Seneca seems in these passages to have totally forgotten the Stoic in the milder sentiments of friendly, filial and conjugal affections; and at the same time to have exhibited a bright and amiable picture of the influence and efficacy of family connexions and interests for the prevention of suicide, even in the midst of the highest personal sufferings:—"we are to live (says he) for the sake of others, as well as for ourselves." This the great panegyrist of suicide allows. Even on heathen then and stoical principles we are to consult our external duties, as well as our internal feelings before we proceed to strike the fatal blow. But how many additional and cogent motives do the principles of true religion, of Christianity, superinduce to strengthen every appearance of natural or moral argument in disfavour of self-murder! The idea of suicide is certainly formed on its best ground, when the infirmities of body and mind are so great, as to render any enjoyment of life, any performance of social duty next to impossible. But here our religion affords us both comfort and expectation. It bids us still live, to show our patience and submission under the rod of affliction, and our faith in the promises of a future reward proportioned to the innocence and extent of our sufferings.

But to follow Seneca through his other elucidations of the subject. "Death" (says he) either puts a total end to our existence or liberates our better part. "If it only liberate, we must be advantaged by being freed from the burden of the body; if it consume us entirely, there is an end of us—and all our good or evil is removed [L]." From hence he would infer, that suicide cannot hurt, but may greatly benefit our condition. The notions of the Stoics relative to the nature of the soul were so confused and uncertain, that they might well argue in the above manner; and the only clear and satisfactory reply that can be made relative to what will follow our death, be it voluntary or natural, must be drawn from divine revelation. This unfolds and enlarges our ideas both of our present and future existence; it teaches us that death puts no end to our total existence; that the present life is only a preparation or probation for the future, and that consequently as a voluntary death puts a sudden end to the one, so it hastens us to our trial in the other. But such hastening is neither desirable in itself, (seeing we are generally ill-prepared for it) nor ever innocent, because

[L] *Mors nos aut consumit aut emittit. Emissis meliora restant onere detracto; consumptis nihil restat: bona pariter malaque submota sunt.*—Ep. xxiv.

it cuts short the time and interrupts the course of our probation, which alone can rest in the will and appointment of God.

Again Seneca urges (Ep. lxx.) "To live is not the point; but to live well. "Wherefore the wise man lives as long as he ought, not as long as he can. "He will consider, where he is to live, with whom, how and in what employ. "He meditates on the sort of life he is likely to live, not on its length. If "many troubles are likely to occur and to disturb his tranquillity, he delivers "himself, nor does he wait for the point of extreme necessity, but as soon as "ever his fortunes begin to appear suspicious, he casts about him and determines, "whether they are likely to have an end? The quick approach or delay of death "is a point of no consequence to him; but to die well or ill; and to die well is "to avoid the hazard of living ill. Wherefore it is the saying of an effeminate person—"that while there is life, there are hopes;" since it is rather true, "that "life is not to be purchased at any price."—That the point is not to live, but to live well, will be easily allowed on all sides; and that "our" wife or good man, as well as the Stoic's, will consider the probable circumstances and conditions of his future life. But his design in thus looking forward will be, not that he may be ready to fly from the threats of adversity by a speedy and voluntary exit, but to make the best use of his penetration and judgment, how to improve such occasions of relief, as may offer; how to confirm and strengthen himself in every habit of integrity and virtue. Whether he dies sooner or later, so he dies but in the discharge of his duty, he will judge that he dies well. But he will think it the part of a coward to desert and fly from his duty by a voluntary death; and though he will never purchase life at the price of infamy, yet as long as he has life, he will hope for the best and strive for the best; and he will not refuse to live as long as he can, because he will always be of opinion that he has duties to discharge.

"Fortune (says Seneca further, Ep. lxx.) has all power over a man whilst he "lives, but none, when he has learned, that he may die when he pleases." That a dead man can be no longer subject to the fickleness or control of fortune, is what it did not need the sagacity of a Seneca to discover: but that, a man may therefore kill himself to fly out of the power of fortune, is quite another matter. The expediency or lawfulness of a business little depends on the possibility or easiness

easiness of its accomplishment. Natural powers are very different from moral or religious conviction; and it is only from hence we can learn, whether or not we "may" die when we please.

"You will find (says he, Ep. lxx.) even among those, who profess wisdom, some, who deny that we ought to offer violence to our own lives, and who judge it a crime to become slayers of ourselves. We must wait, (say such) for that consummation of our lives, which Nature has determined." Here then we seem to be arrived at the pith and marrow of the business. If Seneca has any thing to urge seriously against these professors of wisdom, he will certainly now produce it. Yet what is his reply? Only this; "that the man, who thinks [M] so, excludes himself from the path of liberty." He certainly deprives himself of the liberty of killing himself, because he thinks it wrong so to do; and as Seneca enters no deeper into the argument in this place, we may also drop its further pursuit. He only goes on to show the folly and slavery of bearing troubles, since it is so "easy" to get rid of them and to gain our liberty. Concerning the facility of despatching ourselves we have no difference; but the matter still rests where it did, between what "can" and what "ought" to be done.

"It is objected (says he, Ep. lxxvii.) that we make our journey imperfect, if we stand still in the midst of it, or any where short of its proper end. But no life is imperfect, which is honest. Wheresoever you leave off living, if you leave off well, it is the whole." The whole point then turns [N] on leaving off "well." If a man desert any duty by killing himself, he leaves off "ill," and consequently his life is imperfect and deficient. But according to
the

[M] In another Epistle (lxxvii.) he more fully explains the liberty he is here stickling for. Infelix "servis" hominibus, servis rebus, servis vitæ: nam vita, si moriendi virtus abest, servitus est.

[N] Seneca tells a story in this Epistle (lxxvii.) of one Marcellinus, who almost worn out with disease began to think of killing himself; on which point he consults his friends. Each gave him the advice that seemed most suitable to his respective interests and inclinations. But that which pleased me (says Seneca) best, was given by a Stoic to the following purpose. "Be not tormented, my Marcellinus, as if you were deliberating of any great matter. Life is a thing of no dignity or importance. Your very slaves, your animals possess it in common with yourself: but it is a great thing to die honourably, prudently, bravely. Think how long you have been engaged in the same dull course:—eating,
"sleeping

the principles explained at large in the body of this dissertation, nobody can ever kill himself without deserting some duty; and therefore every suicide's life is by that last act rendered broken and imperfect, and therefore however honest he may have been in his previous life, in accomplishing his death he became fraudulent and faulty.

An objection is proposed to Seneca in the following manner. (Ep. lxxvii.) "I wish to live because I do many honourable things. I unwillingly quit those duties of life, which I discharge faithfully and industriously." This he answers in the most trifling and sophistical manner. "What! do you not know, that it is one duty of your life "to die?" and that there is no certain number of duties to be performed by you? As a fable or play [o], so is life: it matters not how long it has been, but how well it has been acted. It is of no consequence in what part you leave off; leave off when you please—only take care to make a good end." It must surely be of consequence, whether you perform your part of the play through or break off abruptly in the midst, to the disappointment and confusion of all who are performing with you.

Seneca in his Book of Providence (or Inquiry, why Evil happens to good men?) introduces the Deity himself thus speaking at the conclusion. "Let us suppose God to address us in this manner. What complaints can you have to make against me, you who think justly and rightly of things? I have surrounded others with false appearances of good, which they mistake for solid felicity; but to you (meaning the Stoics, who judged rightly of externals) I have given certain and durable satisfactions, of which it is out of the power of externals to deprive you. But you say, "we suffer many severities and hardships." As in the nature of things I could not withdraw you from these, I have armed your souls to endure them all. Despise poverty; no one ever

"sleeping and indulging your appetites. This has been the circle. Not only a prudent, brave or a wretched man may wish to die, but even a "fastidious" one." (Fastidious, that is, one tired with the same dull, stupid round of the same things.) Such was the reasoning, extraordinary as it may seem, which pleased Seneca and confirmed Marcellinus, who immediately starved himself to death with much ceremony.—See more in the same Epistle.

[o] For a much finer comparison of life to a play with much juster conclusions drawn from it, see a passage in Epicetetus, which shall be quoted hereafter.

"lived

"lived so poor as he was born. Despise pain; it will either soon come to an
 "end itself or end you. Despise fortune; I have given her no weapon capable
 "of assailing your soul. Despise death; which either finishes you or translates
 "you. But above all things I have been careful, that no one should be de-
 "tained in life against his will. The passage is clear; if you choose not to
 "fight against evils, you may fly from them: and therefore of all things which
 "I have made necessary for you, I have made nothing so easy as "to die."
 "Consider only how short and expeditious the way is that leads to liberty.
 "There are no such delays imposed on your death, as there are on your birth.
 "Fortune indeed would hold a stout dominion over you, if a man were neces-
 "sarily as long in dying as in being born. Every time and place may teach,
 "how easy it is to renounce your nature and to return her the favour she has
 "bestowed on you. Death is ever at hand; and the separation of soul and
 "body is so quick, as to be utterly imperceptible. Why then do you culk for
 "shame? or why do you fear so long the transition of a moment?"

This seems to cut the argument short in which Seneca is here engaged. "You
 "cannot complain with propriety of evils and hardships in life; for if you like
 "not your state, you are at liberty to leave it at pleasure." Allowing this pro-
 "position to be true, all that he urged so warmly and so frequently in his Epistles
 on the insignificance of life [p], the contempt of death and the easiness of ac-
 "complishing it, is much to the purpose; as tending to inspire a man with reso-
 lution and fortitude to strike the fatal stroke, whenever he inclines towards it.
 But denying the truth of the proposition, "that you may die when you please,"
 all that this famous panegyrist has advanced on the subject of suicide amounts to
 no proof in its favour—to just nothing at all; since he generally takes for granted
 the only point in dispute, viz. "whether suicide in itself be lawful?" and only
 dwells on what is agreed on all sides, that we should not set too much value on
 life, and that it is very easy to compass our deaths. Had his conclusions indeed
 proved ever so strong in favour of its principle, yet as his arguments must have
 been drawn from the light of nature alone, they would not necessarily have been

[p] The indifference to life or death, so strongly inculcated by the Stoics, led to great and disin-
 terested actions, where the tenour of the life was virtuous; but the same doctrine might equally lead
 to the most atrocious wickedness, where the principles were not good and firmly established. It cer-
 tainly sunk below animal instinct, when it urged on so frequently to suicide.

binding

binding upon us, who have a superior knowledge, a divine philosophy, and above all so clear a prospect of futurity, as a state of reward and punishment, upon which to frame our arguments. But trifling as they really are in themselves, they would scarce have been thought worthy of being thus treated of at large, had not a spirit of vain philosophy gone out in these days, which is reckoned by many of superior conviction to the light of revelation, and had not this very subject of suicide been treated in that philosophical light with much [Q] art and sophistry. To such reasoners and their abettors Seneca's arguments may appear specious and plausible, and Seneca's name may carry much weight with it; especially if we consider the great reputation he has obtained by the nature of his demise. For the circumstances attending the accelerated death of Seneca were worthy of admiration, and proved the wonderful composure and firmness, with which that philosopher [R] closed the last scene of his life, and in which he showed himself a true imitator of Socrates. Indeed there was much similarity in the causes, which enforced the deadly bowl on the one and imposed the necessity of opening his own veins on the other. A good man always stands in the way of the evil-minded, who are ever afraid and jealous of his superior virtues. Such a character is apt to raise unpleasant sensations in the breasts of the wicked; he probably impedes them in the full career of their iniquity by his authority and example, and therefore must be removed. On these princi-

[Q] See Hume's Essay on Suicide, (to be considered hereafter) whose mode of reasoning is often similar to Seneca's, especially on the point of confounding the "ability" with the "propriety" of suicide.

[R] He left his friends (he said) "the pattern of his life," as the most valuable possession in his power. He endeavoured to suppress their grief and to recall them to their wonted fortitude, sometimes by gentle persuasions, sometimes by words of authority. "Where are now (says he) the precepts of wisdom? where the exertion of our reason in imminent calamities? Is there any thing wonderful in the cruelty of a Nero? or that after having killed his own brother and his mother, he should seek to imbrue his hands in the blood of his preceptor?"—Seneca's body was so attenuated by age, temperance and sparingness of diet, that though he had not only the veins of his hands and arms, but also of his legs cut, the blood flowed most torpidly from all these issues. During this tedious interval he conversed admirably well with his friends on important subjects. But tired out with this lingering process, he desired a friend to bring him the poison, which he had long laid up in store, being the same used at Athens for condemned persons. This also he swallowed in vain; the juices of his emaciated body being too cold and stagnated to yield to the infusion of poisonous particles. He then had recourse to an hot bath, was afterwards conveyed into a stove, where he was suffocated with steam.—See the account at large in Tac. An. L. XV.

ples

ples a Socrates fell a victim to the machinations of wicked citizens, and the necessity [s] of submitting to his final doom was denounced against a Seneca, at the instigation of those minions who surrounded the throne of his lawless pupil.

It is now time to proceed to an examination of the opinions of another famous Stoic, amid whose fair blossoms of sense and virtue it is painful sometimes to discover the lurking weed of suicide. The substance of what "Epicætetus" advances on this subject may be found in the following passages: in many of which, though he urges it as a natural and lawful resource in certain cases, yet he restrains its practice within a much narrower compass than Seneca does, and indeed seems principally to propose it as a reply to the murmurs of discontent. His general advice seems to be,—“either live contentedly or be gone; but do not let your life be a scene of murmuring:” but let him speak for himself. “Remember the principal thing; that the door is open [T]. Do not be more fearful than children; but as they, when their game or play does not please them, say, I will play no longer; so do you in the same case say, I will play no longer;—and go. But if you stay, do not complain.—But how long (it is asked) is it right to observe these things and not break up the game?—“as long as it goes on agreeably.—Is the house in a smoke? (that is, are you unhappy?) if it be a moderate smoke, I will stay; if a very great one, I will go out. For you must always remember and hold to this, that the door is open.—I will retire, where no one can forbid me to live (for that abode is open to all) and put off my last garment—this paltry body of mine; beyond this no one has any power over me.—If suffering be not worth your while, the door is open; if it be bear it: but it was fit the door should be open against all accidents, and thus we have no trouble.—What hath happened? A son is dead. Nothing more? Nothing. That he is unhappy therefore is an addition every one makes of his own. But you say Jupiter doth not

[s] Tacitus's expression is remarkable. One was sent to Seneca—qui “Necessitatem ultimam denuntiaret.” This implied, that the person must quickly despatch himself, or expect private assassination, or public execution.—(See TAC. AN. XV.)

[T] The following Quotations are to be found in Epicætetus's Discourses, B. I. C. xxiv. Sect. 4.—and C. xxv. Sect. 1. and 3.—B. II. C. i. Sect. 3.—and B. III. C. viii. S. 2. The Translation used is Mrs. Carter's.

“ order these things right.—Why so? He hath opened you the door, whenever
 “ things do not suit you. Go out, man, and do not complain.” A better re-
 ply cannot be made to the above quotations than in the words of the learned
 translator of Epictetus, who adds the following note on the last quoted passage.
 “ It is plain the Stoics could not deny the existence of evils, since they con-
 “ tinually point at self-murder as their remedy. The lenient reviving medicine,
 “ Future Hope” they knew nothing of; and their only alternative was an un-
 “ feeling contempt or a blind despair. To feel tenderly the loss of a son and yet
 “ with much piety to support it and give thanks always for all things unto God
 “ and the Father, in humble faith of their working together for our good, was
 “ an effort beyond Stoicism to reach.”

The following passage (B. I. c. xxix. sect. 5.) considerably restrains the practice
 of suicide, though it allows it in certain cases. “ One takes me by the coat
 “ and drags me to the Forum, and then all the rest bawl out, Philosopher, what
 “ good do your principles do you? See, you are dragging to prison; see, you
 “ are going to lose your head!—But pray what rule of philosophy could I con-
 “ trive, that when a stronger than myself lays hold on my coat, I should not be
 “ dragged? or that when ten men pull me at once and throw me into prison, I
 “ should not be thrown there? But have I learned nothing then? I have
 “ learned to know, that whatever happens, if it be not a matter of “ choice,”
 “ it is nothing to “ me.” Have my principles then done me no good? What
 “ then, do I seek for any thing else to do me good, but what I have learned?
 “ Afterwards as I sit in prison I say; He, who makes this outcry, neither hears
 “ what signal is given nor understands what is said; nor is it any concern to him
 “ to know, what philosophers say or do. Let him alone. Well; but I am
 “ bid to come out of prison again. If you have no further need for me in
 “ prison, I will come out: if you want me again, I will return.—For how long
 “ will you go on thus?—Just as long (says Epictetus) as reason [u] requires I
 “ should continue in this paltry body; when that is over, take it and fare ye

[u] “ The supposition made by Epictetus (says Mrs. Carter in a note, B. I. C. ii. S. 1.) of its
 being sometimes “ reasonable” for persons to kill themselves, is a strong and alarming instance of the
 great necessity of being careful, not only “ in general” to form just and distinct ideas of reasonable and
 unreasonable, but to apply them properly to “ particular” subjects; since such a man as Epictetus failed
 in so important a case, at the very time when he was giving cautions to others.”

“ well. Only let not this be done inconsiderately or from cowardice, or upon every slight pretence; for that again would be contrary to the will of God; for He hath need of such a world and such creatures to live on earth. But if He found a retreat, as he did [w] to Socrates, we are to obey him, when he founds it as our general.” The first part of this passage relative to the use he made of his philosophy is truly beautiful; and though the conclusion is drawn in favour of suicide, yet it is so much restrained, that its author seems herein to be much nearer allied to the Socratic than Stoic school.

The next passage to be produced breathes still more of the spirit of Socrates; and all that can be objected is, that the Stoical signal from God is of more lax interpretation than the Pythagorean and Socratic. It contains an admirable lesson to curb the exuberance of youthful impetuosity, which taking up the general position, “ that it is preferable to be with the Gods,” makes a plunge to get thither all at once, without exercising the patience necessary to travel through the intermediate road. “ One would think (says Epictetus, B. I. C. ix. S. 2.) there should be no need for an old fellow to sit here, contriving that you may not think meanly or entertain low and abject notions of yourselves; but that his business should be to take care, that there may not happen to be among you young men of such a spirit, that knowing their affinity to the Gods, and that we are, as it were, fettered [x] by the body and its possessions, and by so many other things, as are necessary upon these accounts for the economy and commerce of life, they should resolve to throw them off, as both troublesome and useless, and depart to their kindred. This is the work, if any, that ought to employ your master and preceptor, if you had one: that you should come to him and say, — Epictetus, we can no longer bear being tied down to this paltry body; feeding and resting and cleaning it, and hurried about with so many low cares on its account. Are not these things indifferent and nothing to us? and death no evil? Are we not relations of God? Did we not come

[w] The philosophers, who defended suicide, were always desirous of dragging in Socrates as a suicide, and of confounding his necessity (or *jussum Dei*) of drinking poison or running retrograde to the laws of his country, with their self-made necessities, which they were willing should be considered, as so many *jussa Dei*: thus Cicero says, *Ut tunc Socrati, nunc Catoni*; and Seneca to the same purpose.

[x] This argument is of a similar nature to that in the *Somnium Scipionis* of Tully.

" from him? Suffer us to go back thither from whence we came. Suffer us at
 " length to be delivered from these fetters, that chain and weigh us down.
 " Here, thieves and robbers and courts of judicature and those who are called
 " tyrants, seem to have some power over us on account of the body and its pos-
 " sessions. Suffer us to show them, that they have no power.—In this case it
 " would be my part as master to answer: My friend wait for God, till he shall
 " give the signal and dismiss you from this service; then return to him. For
 " the present be content to remain in this post, where he has placed you. The
 " time of your abode here is short and easy to such as are disposed like you. For
 " what tyrant, what robber, what thief, or what courts of judicature are for-
 " midable to those, who thus account the body and its possessions as nothing?
 " Stay; depart not inconsiderately. Thus ought the case to stand between a
 " preceptor and an ingenuous young man."

Though the self-destroying principle of the Stoics intrudes itself into the fol-
 lowing passage (B. III. C. xxiv. S. 5.) in extreme cases, which are conceived to
 be as the finger of God pointing to our death, yet it contains so much good
 sense, so much pious and almost Christian resignation, as to make it deserving
 of high commendation. " You were not produced when you pleased, but when
 " the world had need of you. Hence a wise and good man mindful, who he is,
 " whence he came, and by whom he was produced, is attentive only how he
 " may fill his post regularly and dutifully to God. Is it thy pleasure I should
 " continue any longer in being? I will continue free, spirited, agreeably to thy
 " pleasure; for thou hast made me incapable of restraint in what is my own
 " (that is, in the objects of "choice," which are only a wise man's own).
 " But hast thou no further use for me? Fare thou well. I have staid thus long
 " for thy sake alone and no other; and now I depart in obedience to thee.
 " —How do you depart? Again agreeably to thy pleasure; as free, as thy ser-
 " vant, as one sensible of thy commands and thy prohibitions. But whilst I
 " am employed in thy service, what wouldest thou have me be? a prince or a
 " private man, a senator or a plebeian, a soldier or a general, a preceptor or the
 " master of a family? Whatever post or rank thou shalt assign me, like Socra-
 " tes I will die a thousand times rather than desert it. Where wouldest thou
 " have me be? At Rome or at Athens; at Thebes or at Gyarus? Only remem-
 " ber me there. If thou shalt send me, where men cannot live " conformably to
 " nature,"

“ nature,” I do not depart from thence in disobedience to thy will; but as receiving my signal of retreat from thee. I do not desert thee, Heaven forbid! but I perceive [x] thou hast no use for me. If a life conformable to nature be granted, I will seek no other place, but that in which I am; nor any other company, but those with whom I am. These things we should have ever at hand by night and by day. These things we should write and we should read; and of these we should meditate in private and converse in public.” To the same purpose he adds in another place (B. II. 16.) “ Wherein is Good placed? In the will. Wherein is Evil? In the will. Wherein neither? In those things which depend not on ourselves. Recall then to your mind, O man, what is said of liberty and magnanimity. Exalt your head, as if delivered from slavery. Dare to lift up your eyes to God and say—“ Treat me hereafter at thy own pleasure. I am subservient to thy will. I refuse nothing that seems good to thee. Lead me wheresoever thou pleasest; clothe me as thou pleasest. Dost thou wish me to discharge a public office? or to lead a private life? or to stay? or to be in banishment? to endure poverty or to abound in wealth? I will defend thee before men under all these circumstances and will show them the nature of every thing.”

The following passage is likewise admirable. (Enchiridion, C. xxiii.) “ Remember that you are an actor in a play; of whatever part the master of the company pleases: if he assign you a short one, of a short one; if a long one, of a long one. If he choose you should personate a poor man [z] or a lame man;

[x] “ Whenever He (God or Philosophy) doth not provide what is necessary, he finds a retreat. He opens the door and says to you, “ Come.” Whither? To nothing dreadful; but to that whence you were made; to what is friendly and congenial to the elements. What in you was fire, goes away to fire; what was earth to earth; what air to air; what water to water. There is neither Hades, nor Acheron, nor Cocytus, nor Periphegethon; but all is full of Gods and Demons.”—EPICR. DISC. B. III. C. xiii. S. 1.

[z] Epictetus himself suffered much under poverty and lameness. He speaks thus of his submission to Providence under being old and lame. “ What then! since the crowd of you are blind to the wonders of Providence, ought there not to be some one ready to discharge the office, and in the place of all, to sing praises unto God? What then can I an old and lame man do better than celebrate God? Were I a nightingale, I would perform the business of a nightingale; were I a swan, of a swan; but since I participate of reason, I must sing praises to God: this is my duty and this I will pursue; nor will I desert this station, as long as it may be given me.”—DISC. L. I. C. xvi.

“ or

“ or a magistrate or a private person, see that you perform your character to the best of your power; since this is your part, to act well the character assigned you, but to choose it belongs to another.” We see no room given us here “ to leave off in what part of our character we please”—as was before asserted by Seneca; but an injunction to go through to the end. Indeed a play, or a character in one, abruptly terminated in the midst, is contrary to all dramatic rules whatever, whether it be on the stage of imitation alone, or on the larger one of the world—of living and dying.

From all these passages it appears, that Epictetus allowed a very sparing use of the self-destroying hand; since he thinks every thing almost ought to be suffered before we can plead a dismissal from the Deity. He does not seem to allow the stoical eclat of dying to enhance personal dignity like Cato; he does not urge that general contempt of life and proneness to suicide, which fills the writings of Seneca; but he allows no one to live with the voice of murmur or words of complaint [A] in his mouth: “ for if you like not life, you may leave it; the door is open, get you gone. But a little smoke (he says) ought not to frighten you away; it should be endured, and will be thereby often surmounted.” Though by profession a Stoic, Epictetus did not blindly follow the doctrines of Zeno, but searched for truth, in whatever sect it was to be found. Instead of moroseness and severity, he recommended that sort of resolution alone, which is consistent with complacency and cheerfulness, and which detracts not from the dignity of a truly wise man. Instead of the usual disdain and fastidiousness of the stoical character, he practised a superior degree of modesty; instead of its usual stubbornness and temerity, he possessed a kind of fortitude never devoid of prudent submission. Hence, while the general doctrine of the Stoics highly favoured suicide, the particular opinion of Epictetus advised to wait the will of the gods concerning our death, which will was not discoverable (he thought) but in very extraordinary cases. In short; as he professed to make Socrates the great pattern of his life, so his sentiments of a voluntary death seem nearly allied to that great man’s: and where he gives more fully into the stoical doctrine of suicide, he seems rather to be giving an answer to the petu-

[A] “ Will you not yield (says Epictetus) to your superior? But why did he bring me (says one) into the world on these hard conditions?—Well; if it be not worth your while to live—depart. He hath not need of a discontented spectator.”—(B. IV. C. i. S. 12.)

lancy

lancy of murmurers and complainers than to be following the dictates of his own purer sentiments.

Neither was Epictetus one of those philosophers, who could give out wise maxims of forbearance and patience, whilst he sat at ease himself and enjoyed every convenience and luxury of life; but he was as great an example of resignation in his own behaviour as he was a strenuous adviser of it to others. He closely followed his own doctrine of submission under evils and exhibited an astonishing instance in himself of practical fortitude. The excellence of his favourite maxim—"to bear and forbear"—(which if not borrowed from Christianity was yet truly Christian) was never more fully illustrated than in the humility of his own heart. The contrast was striking between himself and his great predecessor in stoicism, whose sentiments on suicide have just been collected, in all the outward circumstances of their lives. Seneca, who was born in the lap of good fortune, possessed all those advantages of education to which he was entitled by his ingenuous descent. The obscure origin of Epictetus procured him no better a portion than that of slave to a freedman, in whose service he experienced much hardship and cruelty [B]. Learning was thrown in the way of the one with all the charms of attendant ease and affluence; whereas the other was forced to pursue her through the rugged paths of adversity, bodily pain and penury. Seneca was banished from Rome through court-intrigue; Epictetus was sent into exile from the same place for being a man of learning and [c] a philosopher: but the former was soon recalled and appointed preceptor to a prince; whereas the latter lived neglected and was forced to keep a paltry school in an obscure town, to gain a pitiful subsistence. While the one lived in all the luxury of a court, amassed abundance of wealth, cultivated fine gardens and inhabited [d] magnificent

[B] When his master once beat him unmercifully on the leg, Epictetus said with great composure—"You will certainly break my leg." The master did so; and the philosopher only subjoined—"Did I not tell you, you would do it?"—(See Life of EPICTETUS.)

[C] Though born a slave, he was at some period or other of his life manumitted; because at the time of Domitian's publishing an edict for the banishment of all philosophers from Rome, Epictetus was *sui juris* and went into banishment with the rest. He settled at Nicopolis, a little city of Epirus, where he taught school.

[D] Seneca seems almost ashamed of his pomp in externals, when he says in a speech to Nero on his desire of retiring, "I sometimes revolve within myself. Am I,—a man of only Equestrian rank
"and

nificent villas, which seemed to vie with the palaces of emperors;—the other dwelt in a miserable cottage without a door, and was possessed of little other furniture than an earthen lamp by which he studied; but which however was held in so great veneration after his decease, as to be purchased for three thousand drachmas. The one talked perpetually of suicide in the midst of his exaltation and prosperity, recommended it to his friends on all occasions, and had thoughts more than once of practising it on himself rather than endure a little bodily illness. The other allowed it might be expedient and lawful on some extraordinary occasions, but recommended patience and forbearance under all pressures, and lived a pattern of his own maxims to an extreme old age under an accumulated load of pain, affliction [E] and penury.

The profession of the Stoic philosophy was nearly closed with one of its brightest ornaments in the person of "Marcus Aurelius Antoninus." Though his life was of a very busy and active nature, yet his delight from his youth was in the study and practice of this philosophy. He followed all the austerities of this famous sect in his private manners, in the plainness of his garb, the sparingness of his diet and his abstinence from all effeminate and luxurious pleasures. Nature seemed to have formed him with a peculiar dignity of soul, which was scarce to be moved by any outward accidents; yet with all this firmness and constancy in himself, he was [F] lenient towards the imperfections of others,

"and Provincial birth—counted among the Nobles of Rome? Whilst I adorn such gardens and am carried in pomp to my villas in the suburbs; whilst I abound in such possessions of land and money—where is the spirit of philosophy and moderation in all this? One single excuse occurs, that I could not set bounds to my prince's liberality."—See TACITUS, AN. XIV.

[E] There is a Greek distich said to be written by Epictetus himself, whose purport consoled him in all his sufferings.

Δεῖλος Ἐπίκτετος γινώσκων, καὶ συμ' ἀναγκῆς,

καὶ πτωχὸς Ἰρὸς, καὶ φίλος Ἀδωνάτου.

"Though a slave, maimed and poor as Irus, yet is Epictetus dear to the Gods." See his Life in Simpson's Ed. of Enchiridion. Irus was the name of one of Homer's beggars.

[F] "The virtue of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was of a severe and laborious kind. It was the well-earned harvest of many a patient lecture and many a midnight lucubration. At the age of twelve years he embraced the rigid discipline of the Stoics, which taught him to submit his body to his mind, his passions to his reason; to consider virtue as the only good, vice as the only evil, all things external as things indifferent. His Meditations, which are now extant, were composed in the tumult of a camp. But his life was the noblest commentary on the precepts of Zeno. He was severe to himself, indulgent to the imperfections of others, just and beneficent to all mankind."—GIBBON'S Roman Hist. Vol. I.

mild

mild in his decisions and benevolent to all mankind. The Meditations and Maxims, which this good Emperor has left behind him, are filled with the most exalted notions of virtue and universal benevolence. They inculcate the most noble lessons to form a great and dignified character, upon the principles of implicit submission and resignation to the will of the Deity in all outward circumstances of life. The refuge of suicide from external evils is very seldom introduced and seemingly never with an hearty concurrence. "One ought to consider, (says he, *Medit. B. III.*) not only that each day a part of one's life is spent and the remainder grown less, but that it is very uncertain, though a man should live longer, whether his understanding shall continue equally sufficient for his business and for those contemplations, which lead to the knowledge of things divine and human. For if a man once begin to dote, he may perhaps continue to breathe, to receive nourishment, to have vain imaginations and to exert the low appetites: but the true power of governing himself, of accurately performing the duties of life and of judging this very point—"whether he should depart from life or not?" and also all other powers, which require a vigorous understanding, must be entirely extinguished." Again; "You may live at present in the same way you would choose to be living, if you knew your death were approaching. If you are hindered to do so, then you may quit life; and yet without conceiving the quitting it to be an evil. If the smoke be troublesome, I go out of my house; and where is the great matter? While no such thing forces me out, I as freely stay; and who can hinder me from acting as I please? But my pleasure is to act as the rational and social nature requires. (*B. V. S. 29.*) Again; If you be grieved about any thing external, it is not the thing itself that afflicts you, but your judgment about it; and it is in your power to correct this judgment and to get quit of it. If you be grieved at any thing in your own disposition, who hinders you from correcting your maxims of life? If you be grieved because you have not accomplished some sound and virtuous design, set about it effectually rather than be grieving that it is undone. But (you say) some superior force withstands." Then you have no cause of sorrow; for the fault of the omission lies not in you. You say again, "Life is not worth retaining if this be not accomplished." Quit life then with the same serenity, as if you had accomplished it; and with good will even to those who withstand you." (*B. VIII. 47.*) Again; "Resolutely force yourself into these few characters, (*viz.* of judging rightly of every thing, giving it a true name, and submitting accordingly) and if you be able to abide in them, abide

" as one, who is removed to and settled in the Fortunate Islands. But if you
 " perceive you fall from them and succeed not thoroughly, retire boldly into
 " some corner, where you may prevail by meeting with less opposition; or
 " even depart out of life altogether: yet not angry, that you could not prevail,
 " but with simplicity, liberty and modesty; having at least performed this one
 " thing well in life, that you have in this manner departed out of it." (B. X. 8.)
 " Again; " Let nobody have it in his power to say with truth of you, that you
 " are not a man of simplicity, candour and goodness. But let him be mistaken,
 " whoever has such an opinion of you. Now all this is in your own power.
 " For who is he, that can hinder you from being good and pure at heart?
 " Only do you determine to live no longer, if you are not to be such a man.
 " For neither does reason in that case require you should." (B. X. S. 32.)

With respect to the length or shortness of life being insignificant, and the
 number of duties to be performed undetermined, the good Emperor speaks much
 more rationally and to the purpose than Seneca. " To the person (says he) who
 " repents that alone to be good, which is seasonable, and reckons it indifferent,
 " whether he has opportunity of performing a greater or smaller number of actions
 " according to right reason; whether he beholds this universe for a longer or a short-
 " er space; to him death cannot appear terrible. You have lived, o man, as a citizen
 " of this great state (the universe); of what consequence to you, whether it be only
 " for five years? What is according to the laws is equal and just to all. What is
 " there terrible in this, that you are sent out, not by a tyrant or an unjust judge,
 " but by that nature, which at first introduced you? As if the magistrate who
 " employed the player, should dismiss him again from the scene. But you say,
 " I have not finished the five acts, but only three. You say true; but in life
 " three acts may make a complete play. For the same person, who was the
 " cause of the composition, appointing also its dissolution or end, neither of
 " them are chargeable on you. Though therefore the whole action of the dance
 " or dramatic performance may be rendered incomplete by being interrupted and
 " broken off before its proper close, yet as to the soul, in whatever part of its
 " action or wheresoever it be overtaken by death, its past action may be a com-
 " plete whole without any mutilation. Depart therefore contented and in good
 " humour; for he is propitious and kind who dismisses you [G]."

[G] See B. XI. S. 1; and B. XII. S. 35 and 36 for the substance of this quotation.

He who acts well the part allotted him, attains to the greatest happiness and perfection of his nature; and, whether it be a short or a long part, equally completes the whole that is assigned him. But then his dismissal from his part must not be of his own seeking, but clearly imposed on him by the great distributor of parts. If an "involuntary" death seize him in early days, he deserts not his post, but is taken from it. But any signal, or leave of a voluntary departure from the scene of life, must needs be very vague and uncertain, and scarce assignable even on stoical reasoning; since whatever be the outward circumstances of life, the soul may still be employed in its own proper offices, and also exhibit under the heaviest oppressions, its purest exertions of disinterested virtue. Such in fact seem to be the real sentiments both of Epictetus and Antoninus. Instances to prove this have already been brought from the writings of the former; and a few may suffice from those of the latter. "Why should you not" (says Antoninus) wait patiently either for your extinction or translation into "another state? And till the proper season of it comes, what should employ you but to reverence the gods, and to do good to men; bearing with their weaknesses, abstaining from injuries and considering external things subservient to "your pitiful body and life, as what are not yours nor in your own power?" (B. V. S. 33.) Again; "You may so manage, that in whatever place or time "one comes upon you, you may be found a man of an happy lot. He is "happy, who procures this good lot to himself. The happy lots are good "dispositions of soul, good desires and good actions." (B. V. 36.) Again; "Make yourself regular, by regulating your several actions one by one; "so that if each action answer its end and have what perfection belongs to "it, you may be satisfied. But in this nothing can hinder you. But (you "say) may not something external withstand me? Nothing can hinder you "from acting the just, the temperate, the wise part. Some external effects of "your actions may be obstructed; but then there may arise another action of "yours equally suited to this regular and orderly composition of life, concerning "which we are speaking—in your acquiescence under this obstruction and your "calmly turning yourself to that conduct, which is in your power." (B. VIII. 32.) Lastly; "It becomes a man of true wisdom neither to be inconsiderate, impatient nor ostentatiously contemptuous about death; but to await the season "of it, as of one of the operations of nature. As you await the natural season

“ of the birth, so await the season of death, when your soul shall fall out of these its teguments.” (B. IX. 3.)

Such then are found to have been the opinions and tenets of the Stoics on the subject of suicide: and two things may in general be observed concerning them. First and principally, that the better Stoics never seem to have allowed suicide to be a proper refuge from vice and its just punishment, or to be practised as an evasion of the laws of one's country; but chiefly as a deliverance from evil or trouble in the extremity, which extremity they interpreted to be the signal of God for quitting life. Secondly; that they differed much among themselves on the “ extent” of these signals. Cato in delivering the doctrines of Zeno seems to lay the greatest stress on the “ fit opportunity” of dying, at the moment it is most becoming a man's own personal dignity; and that, whether he be under fortunate or adverse circumstances at the time: accordingly when that moment seems arrived, no consideration whatever of externals, such as the affectionate regards and interests of a wife, a family or friends are to sway with the wife man, so as to divert him from his deadly purpose. In this manner did Cato himself act. But in Seneca, though a warm patroniser of suicide, there is some relaxation; as he evidently suffers the concerns and attachments of others to bias the resolutions of the stoical wife man and to call him back into life, at a time he would otherwise wish to depart: and he suffered himself to be more than once influenced by these motives. Again; in Epictetus's interpretation of the stoical doctrine of suicide, so much resignation and submission to all the evils of life is required, before a man can discover the signal of departure, that there is no fear (especially if his own example also be taken into consideration) of any number of suicides on his allowance of its practice: since the mean condition, the sufferings and penury of few can exceed those of Epictetus himself, who yet deemed them not sufficient signals to justify his own departure. Lastly; the maxims and character of Antoninus exhibit original stoicism so much refined and meliorated, as to settle in the exertion of every thing that is great and noble, that is capable of producing an excellent private citizen or public magistrate; and the particular doctrine of suicide is so sparingly mentioned and so little encouraged as to amount to an almost total prohibition of its practice. The modern race of suicides therefore (who are willing to set aside the duties of Christianity) can yet scarce take shelter under the opinions of this sect of self-destroying philosophers, because,
being

being in general of so very different a cast and temper from the stoical wise man, they can claim no indulgence for falling into his errors, till they have first proved themselves to be the imitators of his virtues [H].

C H A P. V.

*The principles of the "New Academy" being to doubt and confute the opinions of others, not to establish any of their own, could determine nothing precisely on this subject.—Cicero.—Passages produced from his writings either for or against suicide only deceive, unless the character he is supporting at the time be accurately observed.—His own private opinions best collected from his familiar Epistles.—Quotations to prove, that he not only allowed the lawfulness of suicide in certain situations, but would have practised it on himself, had he not wanted resolution.—Sentiments of poets and tragic writers.—A passage in the *Odyssey*.—Arguments concerning suicide from *Sophocles* and *Euripides*.—The self-murder of *Ajax*.—A passage from *Virgil's* sixth book of the *Æneis*.—Explanations by *Bishop Warburton* and *Addison*.—Remarks on these and proposal of a third.—The only examples of suicide in the *Æneis* are females.—*Virgil's* *Hero* supports every trial with fortitude.—Opinions and practices of some famous individuals of old.—*Marcus Brutus* not originally a favourer of suicide, or an approver of *Cato's* death; changes his sentiments with his fortunes.—Conference between *Brutus* and *Cassius* before the battle of *Philippi*; both agree on the propriety of suicide, if defeated; and both execute it on themselves.—*Pliny the Elder*.—Extracts from him concerning suicide.—*Pliny the Younger*.—Extracts from his Epistles.—Suicide of *Corellius Rufus*.—*Pliny's* opinion, that suicide is honourable or otherwise according to the deliberation used concerning it.—*Josephus's* and *Eleazar's* harangues to their soldiers on this subject.—Summary of what has been collected concerning the opinions of the ancient philosophers.*

[H] Pudeat ergo nuperos voluntariæ mortis patronos, imbelles homines, pro patriâ, pro familiâ, pro se nihil unquam viriliter auros, umbraticis tantum in scriptis audaces, stoicam *arabiarum* ridiculè ostentare.—BROTIER ad Cap. xxix. L. VI. AN. Taciti.

THERE

THERE was another distinguished sect of philosophers, whose principles on the subject of suicide have not yet been mentioned; these were the followers of Carneades or the New Academy. But as the chief employment of these was to doubt the truth of the opinions of all other sects, to confute those of one by another, and to advance nothing for certain of their [1] own, it must not be expected, that any positive assertions should be found in their writings respecting suicide. Much is occasionally said in the philosophical works of Cicero (who was a great ornament of this sect) on the subject of self-murder; sometimes in its favour, sometimes otherwise: but the clue is easy. He is (according to the principles of the New Academy) either a follower of Plato, of Zeno, or Epicurus, as his subject leads him; and what is to be met with in his works is rather a collection of the opinions of others (of the Greek philosophers in particular) than any determinations of his own. It is easy therefore for writers on either side of this question to quote passages from Cicero in appearance strongly making in their own favour; which must grossly mislead a reader not consulting for himself. The passages therefore from Tully hitherto quoted in the present work have been given under their proper heads, as Platonic, Stoic or Epicurean; and as the Academics can strictly be said to hold no opinion of their own, as a sect, concerning suicide, it remains only to discover Cicero's private sentiments of the matter.

Now it will not be difficult to discover these, since it plainly appears from numberless passages in his familiar Epistles (where his real sentiments are most discoverable), that he not only thought favourably of suicide on certain occasions, but would have actually destroyed himself, when in certain situations, but for his natural timidity and want of resolution. It appears that he was sensible it would have been more for his own honour (according to the ideas of his times) to have destroyed himself; but through a want of proper resolution to accomplish the bloody work, instead of drawing his sword, he drew out his pen, "to consult his friends" on that point. He could easily divine their answer; and thus not only his life was preserved (of which he was very fond) but his vanity (a ruling foible also) flattered by their assiduities and anxieties for his safety. Thus when his friend Atticus, his brother Quintus, and all his well-wishers urged

[1] They went no further than "probabilities," which they allowed were to guide mankind in their pursuit of happiness.

him (as was natural) not to give way to despondency, he seemed (as though unwillingly and to save an appearance of dignity) to submit his life to their entreaties alone, when in truth his known pusillanimity might have relieved them from all such disquietude.

No event in Cicero's life seems to have stuck so closely by him as his banishment. He could not bear the thoughts of being absent from Rome, the great stage of contention for fame and power. He seemed at that time deserted, and was afraid lest he should be forgotten by the heads of all parties, who were ready enough respectively to court his friendship when present, in compliment to his splendid talents. Whilst in exile, he lost all hopes of being able to balance the interests of the contending chiefs, so as to be himself the first citizen in a free state. No wonder then, that it was during this season of despondency, that he mostly wrote about and threatened his friends with the execution of the fatal catastrophe, unless they could put a speedy end to his miseries by exerting all their influence and power for his recall. He writes thus on this occasion to his brother Quintus (L. I. Ep. iv.) "The tears of my friends [κ] have prevented me from flying to death as my refuge, which certainly would have been more suitable to my honour and to the avoidance of intolerable troubles; but if I should die, I should prove the destruction of all those friends, to whom I have hitherto been no disgrace. But do you, as I wrote to you before, probe and search the matter to the bottom, and then write me your true unbiassed sentiments; and let them be adapted to my present state and condition rather than to your own love for me. I will preserve my life, as long as it can be for your interest or there can be any hope." He writes again on the same Clodian business, whilst in banishment (L. I. Ep. iii. ad Quintum). "I wish you had sooner seen or heard of my death. I wish I had left you the survivor, not only of my life, but of my dignity. But I call all the Gods to witness, that I was recovered from death by this common voice of all, that a great part of your existence was wrapt up in mine. However I have offended and done wrong; since had I fallen (slain myself), my death would have easily convinced you of my piety and love towards you.—However as long as it shall be needful to you, or you shall think there is any hardship to be endured, I will live. But I cannot long abide in this life; since neither prudence nor

[κ] *Me ad mortem ire prohibuerunt*—is the expression

"learning

“ learning has force sufficient to enable me to endure so great trouble. I know
 “ there has been a more honourable and a more useful period, in which I ought
 “ to have died:—but not that alone, I have omitted other points also. But
 “ this neither must nor can be done, that I should abide any longer in this mi-
 “ serable and shameful life than either your convenience, or some well-grounded
 “ hope shall require.” This whole epistle (which was written to his brother
 during his own banishment) is a convincing proof both of Tully’s allowance of
 the lawfulness of suicide under circumstances like his own, and of his timidity
 in attempting its accomplishment.

“ I wish I may live (says Cicero to Atticus, Ep. ad Atticum, L. III. 3.) to
 “ see that day, when I may have reason to return you thanks for having com-
 “ pelled me to live: as yet I must repent of my compliance.” Again; (ad Attic.
 L. III. 4.) “ I repent, my Pomponius, that I am yet alive; but you had much
 “ hand in persuading me to live.” Again; (L. III. 19.) “ Wherefore I am
 “ determined to go to Epirus: not that the situation of one place is more de-
 “ sirable to me than that of another; but that either I should return to safety
 “ (that is, be recalled from banishment) with greater pleasure from your port;
 “ or if such safety should be cut off, there is no place, in which I could more
 “ easily sustain life, or (which would be far better) throw it away. I have
 “ little hope; but since I have begun (that is, determined to live at present)
 “ I will neither desert the mournful entreaties of one of the best of brothers,
 “ nor the promises made to Sestius and the rest; nor yet will I disappoint the
 “ hopes of that most wretched of women my Terentia, nor the obsecrations of
 “ the miserable Tulliola, nor the purport of your friendly letters. Epirus will
 “ either be the road to my safety—or—to what I wrote of above. But I en-
 “ treat you, Pomponius,—if you understand that I have been compelled to
 “ destroy myself and in so [L] doing my friends, that “you” would compas-
 “ sionate my case, that you would uphold my brother Quintus, that you would
 “ protect my Terentia and my children;—would come and see me if possible
 “ (when dead), and would assign me a small portion of your land here sufficient
 “ to contain my breathless corpse.” Again; “ In that you call me to life (says
 “ he to Atticus, L. III. 7.) you only effect, that I abstain from laying violent
 “ hands on myself; but you cannot bring it about that I should not repent of

[L] Ut ipse me & meos perderem—is the expression.

“ my

“ my determination to live ;—the most honourable time indeed of my dying is “ passed by.” In a letter to Nigidius Figulus (L. IV. 13. ad Fam.) he says, “ I am spent with such cares, that I think I am committing a fault by remaining [N] in life.” Such was the despondency of Cicero during his banishment; and though he threatened his friends so often with his approaching self-murder, yet he seems to rest tolerably contented under [o] their persuasions to life; except as far as might be necessary to keep up those alarms in their breasts, which might make them bestir themselves to obtain his recall: and he seems satisfied with his own observation, “ that the honourable time of doing it was past.”

It may not be amiss to add to the sentiments of those great philosophers, who have hitherto been noticed under their particular sects, some scattered opinions, which may be collected from the Poets and Tragedians of antiquity, as likewise from the writings and conduct of certain famous individuals. Homer has put a speech into the mouth of Achilles not favourable to the impatience of suicide under any score of trouble, though not indeed made with any reference to its commission. When Ulysses meets the ghost of Achilles in the shades below, he thus addresses him and receives his answer.

“ But sure the eye of time beholds no name
 “ So blest as thine in all the rolls of fame:
 “ Alive we hail’d thee with our guardian Gods,
 “ And dead thou rul’st a king in these abodes.—
 “ Talk not of ruling in this dolorous gloom,
 “ Nor think vain words (he cried) can ease my doom.
 “ Rather I choose laboriously to bear
 “ A weight of woes and breathe the vital air,

[N] See the matter of Cicero’s intentional suicide amply delineated and many passages adduced in a book entitled, “ *Epistola ad virum eruditum Conyers Middleton, Auctore Jacobo Tunstall;*” 8vo. Cantab. 1741. p. 73, &c. This writer attempts to prove, that not only on the Clodian business, but on the breaking out of the civil war between Cæsar and Pompey, on the death of his daughter Tullia, on Antony’s accession to power, Cicero harboured thoughts of suicide, but the passages he brings to prove these latter purposes are more obscure than those written in his banishment.

[o] “ Death (says Montagne) was coveted by Cato, indifferent to Socrates, but terrible to Cicero.” *Essays*, Vol. I. B. I.

" A slave to some poor hind, that toils for bread,
 " Than reign the sceptered monarch of the dead [P]."

With such ideas as these about him, Achilles could not well have committed suicide on any occasion. The speech of Satan in Milton is exactly opposite in every point.

—————" In my choice
 " To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
 " Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven!"

The Greek tragedians very frequently introduce the idea of suicide, as much becoming the dignity of a noble mind under certain circumstances. The general argument with them turns "on its being a shameful thing, and the sign of a daftardly, if not a wicked disposition in those, who are of ingenuous birth, to live in slavery or ignominy; and that it must be an advantage to any one to kill himself, when sore pressed with evils; since to preserve life to our own torment is contrary to every rule of nature." Such reflections as these are profusely scattered through the dramatic writings of Sophocles and Euripides. But an illustrious suicide in particular arrests our notice, in the person of the Telamonian Ajax, as his voluntary end is described by Sophocles in the tragedy bearing his name. The mind of this sturdy Grecian is supposed to be overfret with rage and indignation on the adjudgment of Achilles's armour to his crafty rival Ulysses. This disgrace he could not endure. He shrinks for shame from the sight of every one. "How shall he appear before his father Telamon without the rewards adjudged to superior valour? He deems himself odious to Gods and men, and is only in doubt about the means of accomplishing his own death. Should he rush on certain destruction by the performance of some signal action against the common foe? Not so (says he), because this would be doing service to the Atridæ my greatest enemies. Some other step must be taken, by which I may convince my aged parent, that no daftardly soul ever sprang from his loins. It is shameful for a man to aim at living long under misfortunes, which are irremediable. For what satisfaction can one day produce above another by procrastinating death? I set not the smallest value on that man, who buoys himself up with vain hope. But it becomes one of noble birth either to live honourably or to die honourably: and this is the

[P] See *Odysses*, B. X. Pope's Translation.

" whole

“ whole of the matter.” The Chorus then and his wife Tecmessa endeavour to insinuate into him the necessity of a submission to his fortunes; and they strive also to avert him from his deadly purpose, by all the usual topics of filial, conjugal and parental attentions—but in vain. His answer is concise and ferocious;—“ that women have tears at will; but that a good surgeon never “ stands prating, when he finds his knife necessary for his patient’s cure.” When he is alone however he confesses himself to be somewhat softened by Tecmessa’s representations of her own and her infant’s probable sufferings after his decease. But this transient fit of tenderness is soon over—“ and now (says “ he) the sword is fixed (—the deadly present from Hector),—fixed so as to penetrate most effectually; if a man can be cool enough to think of that in such “ a moment as the present.” After some ejaculations he rushes on its point and thus terminates [Q] the scene of his tumultuous life.

The famous passage in Virgil relative to suicide shall now be considered. When Æneas descends into the shades below under the guidance of the Sibyl, he is first made to pass through a crowd of ghosts, who were hovering on the hither banks of the Styx and could not get across, because their bodies had received no funeral rites on earth. However having secured his own passage by exhibiting to Charon’s view “ the sacred branch,” the first airy phantoms he met with were of those, who died when infants; the next, of those who had been falsely condemned to death, and the third of those, who had deprived themselves of life. These last are represented as very sorrowful for their rash and hasty step, and as being most earnest and anxious to return into life and to the endurance of all their former affliction; but the Fates oppose; they are bound to their present station and a repassage over the river is absolutely impracticable. After these appeared the shades of such as perished through the

[Q] Hæctora qui solus, qui ferrum, ignemque Jovemque
Sustinuit toties, unam non sustinet iram;
Invictumque virum vincit dolor;—adripit ensem—
Et, meus hic certe est; an & hunc sibi poscit Ulysses?
Hoc, ait, utendum est in me mihi; quique cruore
Sæpe Phrygum maduit domini nunc cæde madebit:
Ne quisquam Ajacem possit superare nisi Ajax.
Dixit & in pectus tum demum vulnera passum,
Quà patuit ferro, lethalem condidit ensem.——OVID. Met.

extravagance of love, and also those of ambitious [R] warriors, who fell in battle. All these are said to occupy the first region of Pluto's domains, or that spacious plain, which was supposed to intervene between the further banks of Styx and the entrance either into Tartarus the destination of the damned, or into Elysium the abode of the blessed.

Two writers of distinguished abilities have made remarks on this passage, whose different opinions shall be first introduced, before a further inquiry is made into the poet's meaning. The learned Bishop Warburton in his *Divine Legation* (B. II. f. 4.) has displayed a fund of knowledge and ingenuity in interpreting the descent of Æneas into the shades below, as portraying the initiation of the hero into the great Eleusinian mysteries; to which he accommodates every passage and almost every expression. It would be foreign to the purpose to follow this distinguished writer through the whole of his ingenious hypothesis; what relates to the present passage must alone be noticed. "Purgatory (for so the Bishop calls Virgil's first station after crossing the Styx) is inhabited by suicides, extravagant lovers and ambitious warriors; and in a

[R] Continuo auditæ voces vagitus & ingens,
 Infantumque animæ flentes in limine primo;
 Quos dulcis vitæ exortes & ab ubere raptos
 Abstulit atra dies & funere misit acerbo.
 Hos juxta, falso damnati crimine mortis;
 Nec vero hæc sine forte data, sine judice sedes.
 Quæsit Minos urnam movet; ille silentium
 Consiliumque vocat vitæque & crimina discit.
 Proxima deinde tenent mœsti loca, qui sibi letum
 Infantes peperere manu luceinque perosi
 Projecere animas. Quàm vellent æthere in alto
 Nunc & pauperiem & duros perferre labores!
 Fata obstant tristisque palus inamabilis undâ
 Alligat & novies Styx interfusa coercet.—
 Nec procul hinc partem fusi monstrantur in omnem
 Lugentes campi: sic illos nomine dicunt:
 Hic quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit,
 Secreti celant calles & myrtea circum
 Styx tegit; curæ non ipsâ in morte relinquunt.—
 Inde datum molitur iter, jamque arva tenebant
 Ultima, quæ bello clari secreta frequentant.——Æn. VI. 426.

" word

" word by all those, who had given a loose to the exorbitancy of their passions;
 " which made them rather miserable than wicked. But of all these disorders
 " suicide being most pernicious to society, the poet has more distinctly marked
 " out the misery of this condition. Here he keeps close to the mysteries [s],
 " which not only forbid suicide, but taught on what account it was criminal.
 " Hitherto all goes on well. But what must we say to the poet's putting chil-
 " dren and men falsely condemned into his purgatory? For though the modern
 " Roman faith and inquisition send these two sorts of persons into a place of
 " punishment, yet the genius of ancient Paganism had a far gentler spirit. It
 " is indeed difficult to tell, what these inmates have to do here. And the com-
 " mentators, as is their use, observe a profound silence. First then for the
 " infants. These appear to have been the cries and lamentations, that Proclus
 " tells us were heard in the mysteries; and the occasion of denouncing this
 " terrible doctrine relative to infants was, to induce parents the more forcibly
 " to preserve their offspring, which was not an unnecessary duty to inculcate,
 " at a time when the horrid practice of exposing infants was so universal. As
 " to the " falsely condemned," it is the most difficult passage in the whole
 " *Æneis*." The Bishop however proceeds to a solution of this difficulty, but
 in a manner too copious to be inserted at large. Suffice it to observe, that after
 quoting a long passage from Plato's *Gorgias* relative to Jupiter's appointment of
 the three infernal judges, (who were to have their tribunals erected in the shades
 below, just at the division of the roads leading to Tartarus and Elysium, and that
 to Minos an appeal was to lie from the judgment of the other two) he con-
 cludes, " that this appeal is what is intended by Virgil, and that the " falso
 " *damnati crimine mortis*" do not mean men falsely condemned to death
 " above, but wrongly judged below:" (whose judgment therefore was to be
 set right by Minos.) " Only one difficulty (his Lordship adds) occurs, which
 " is a fault of the poet's, who would have corrected it, had he lived long enough
 " to have revised his work; and that is, that these people ought not to have
 " been placed where they now are, to suffer purgatory before trial and con-
 " demnation, but just before the tribunal of the judges at the highway-entrance
 " above described." The Bishop then supposes this perplexed matter unraveled,
 " which (he says) much wanted it, as may be seen from its having puzzled

[s] See a note concerning Warburton and the "mysteries," as applicable to the doctrine of suicide,
 in the preceding Chapter under Socrates's opinion of suicide.

" the

“ the greatest genius of his time, who has given it a wrong interpretation.” The person here alluded to is the amiable Addison, and the wrong interpretation (as the Bishop thinks) is to be found in the following passage [T].

“ There are three kinds of persons (says this writer) described by Virgil, as
 “ situated on the borders of the dominions of Pluto. But I can give no reason
 “ for their being stationed there in so particular a manner, but because none of
 “ them seem to have had a proper right to a place among the dead, as not having
 “ seen through the whole length of their days, or finished the term of life,
 “ which had been allotted them upon earth. The first are the souls of infants
 “ snatched away by untimely ends. The second those, who are put to death
 “ wrongfully and by unjust sentence. The third those, who weary of life, have
 “ laid violent hands on themselves. As for the second Virgil adds, that Minos
 “ gives them a rehearing, &c. The third he represents eagerly wishing to
 “ return to life, &c. It is very remarkable, that Virgil, notwithstanding self-
 “ murder was so frequent among the Heathens and had been practised by some
 “ of the greatest men in the very age before him, has here represented it as
 “ so “ heinous a crime.” But here he was guided by the doctrines of his great
 “ master Plato, who says man is placed in a station,” &c.

If the present insignificant writer might be permitted to subjoin an opinion of his own after the great authorities already quoted, he would venture an explanation of this passage, neither entirely according with either of the above, nor yet totally differing from them. Now a better reason does not easily appear assignable for classing infants and those falsely condemned to death, as also those who have pined away through love, or even ambitious warriors, who are so often cut short in their career, with suicides, than that they may all be said (with Addison) to have come alike to untimely ends, by not having lived out the days that nature in its usual course seemed to have allotted them. But granting this to be true, a question arises, “ why are innocence and guilt thus drawn together into the same station? why are infants and unjust sufferers, who brought not this premature death on themselves, ranked with those, who committed the heinous crime of suicide (as both Warburton and Addison suppose Virgil to deem it)?” But what if it should be found, that the poet does not

[T] See Addison's works, Vol. II. 300. 4to. or Tatler, N^o 154.

mean in this passage to censure suicide (which seems to be taken for granted) as so heinous a crime? His words may be reckoned of doubtful interpretation at least, if they do not rather leave the matter of suicide indifferent in some measure in point of guilt or innocence. The poet asserts that there may be "innocent" suicides (or at least suicides of previously innocent character, if not perfectly so in their suicide), or why does he put in the word [u] "Infantes?" He also seems to assign the cause of that suicide, whose situation he here appropriates, to have arisen solely from penury or heavy affliction—or why does he mention the desire of returning [x] to that state of suffering in particular, without noticing any other cause, which might have urged to this self-slaughter. It seems therefore [y] as if Virgil allowed extreme poverty and affliction to be innocent causes of suicide; or at least considered this calamitous event in no worse a light than as an error in judgment, of which indeed the doer might afterwards repent when too late, and which accordingly he makes him do with so much earnestness. Virgil's suicide therefore may with propriety be ranked among the number of those, who were unfortunate or "miserable (as Warburton writes) rather than wicked."

Now with respect to those, who die in infancy or in early age, the Platonic philosophy (as Warburton remarks) seems at a loss what to do with their souls; since in the account related by one, who is supposed to return from the dead and to tell all he saw there, the infernal traveller is only made to report of the state of those, who died in infancy or early age,—“things either not important enough (in Plato's opinion, *De Rep.* 10.) or not fit to be related.” Wherefore the poet, after supposing them wafted over the Styx, as souls that had enjoyed the rites of sepulture, leaves them at his first arrival on the other side, as not knowing where to place them better in the course of his journey.

[u] ————— qui sibi letum

Infantes pēperere manu, &c.

[x] ————— quàm vellent æthere in alto,

Nunc & pauperiem & duros perferre labores!

[y] That the poet, following Plato's ideas in this whole descent of Æneas, was not obliged to consider suicide as an "heinous crime," when committed in consequence of grievous sufferings (the only cause he mentions) is very plain from what has been seen above of that philosopher's exceptions in his *Book of Laws*, where he assigns it no punishment, when committed "on any sorrowful or inevitable turn of fortune."——(See the preceding Chapter under Plato's opinions.)

But as the Bishop is forced to apply to a "supposed" defect or oversight in the poet, to establish his interpretation of the "unjustly condemned," it seems more natural to adopt the usual interpretation. Indeed the whole company are brought together on more equal terms by lessening the supposed heinousness of the crime (in the poet's opinion) of such suicides as are stationed here; especially as he further saves the credit of the "unjustly condemned," by [z] signifying that they are still to undergo the last judgment of Minos, which is to set all right with them.

It appears also from this passage, that if insepulture had been a "general" punishment of "all" suicide in those days, Virgil would have placed its perpetrator among the wandering ghosts on "this" side the Styx: or if its commission had unavoidably consigned a man to punishment in the next world, he would have sent him to Tartarus at once. But as he chose neither wholly to approve the action in contradiction to the Sibylline or Platonic authority (under which his hero acted) nor wholly to condemn it, he devised a middle way by sending his suicide neither to Tartarus [A] nor Elysium, but into the Plains of Purification or Purgation (as they are generally understood to mean) amid other doubtful company [B]. It seems further as if Virgil himself had no partiality for

[z] Nec vero hæc sine sorte datæ, sine iudice sedes:
Quæsitur Minos urnam movet; ille silentium
Conciliumque vocat, vitæque & crimina dicit.

[A] The author of a poem called "The Grave" (Rob. Blair) far outstrips Virgil in his assignation of poetic punishment for the suicide. He makes all the other ghosts (even of the wicked) shun his society.

Unheard of tortures
Must be reserv'd for such. These herd together;
The "common damned" shun their society,
And look upon themselves as fiends less foul.—Part II.

[B] "We must leave this region of Ades in general (of which in Virgil's account there are five distinct districts); only I would willingly take notice of one thing first, which is this; That I think we ought not to regard the persons in this region, as "criminals." The whole receptacle for departed souls is laid out by Virgil into three great or general divisions. Of these Elysium is for the very good and Tartarus for the very bad. What then can Erebus be for, but the "indifferent?"—such as were not bad enough to be flung into Tartarus nor good enough to be admitted into Elysium. Accordingly the persons, whom Virgil places in Erebus, are infants; innocent sufferers; such suicides as the Romans thought were excusable for what they did; unfortunate lovers; and common warriors:—a profession, which

for the stoical doctrine of a dignity in suicide, since he describes but two self-murderers in the *Æneis*, and those of the weaker sex. The one expired in flames on the disappointments of love and revenge; the other made use of the more ignoble rope, as a refuge from rage and indignation on the baffling of her schemes [c]. By these examples he should seem to insinuate, that suicide is
but

which was one of the most virtuous according to the chief idea of virtue among the Romans. That class of all these, which to us would seem the most guilty, Virgil absolutely declares to be innocent,—*qui sibi letum—Infantes peperere manu*. Supposing them to be so according to his ideas (says *Myfigetes*) pray how comes he to place them in Hell?—That (answered *Polymetis*) is easily accounted for. On the Heathen scheme he must place them there; and I think he seems to have placed them in a very proper part of it. Ades which we interpret (not quite so exactly as we should) by our word Hell, anciently signified the grave or place of the dead in general. All therefore that die, must go to Ades. The very good are in one part of it, as well as the very bad in another; and the indifferent must be in some part or other, as well as the good and the bad. It is the common receptacle of all, who are born in our world; and even the great heroes, who were supposed to go to Heaven or to preside over stars, had their airy representation in Ades. As all mankind may be divided into three general classes, the good, the bad and the indifferent, Ades is laid out by Virgil into three general divisions, Erebus, Tartarus and Elysium. The indifferent he places neither in the clear light of Elysium nor in the solid darkness of Tartarus; but in a twilight sort of world, of a melancholy air indeed (for the general notion of death among the ancients was sad and gloomy), but not incapable of some pleasure or consolation. In Erebus (or this division for the indifferent) Virgil places the infants, as not deserving death, first and nearest to the land of the living. Next to the infants he places such as had been condemned to death without a cause. Then such suicides he looked upon as least guilty; such as had the most reason for quitting the station, which the great leader had assigned them in the upper world. Then are those whose lives were shortened either by love or in war. These might very well not be criminals; they have not in general the appearance of being so; and as there are many warriors, as well as lovers, that fling away their lives without any great merit too, there will be enough of each to stock their particular districts in this region of the indifferents, where Virgil plunges them deeper and nearer the borders of Tartarus than the little innocents and unjustly condemned persons we have been speaking of. I shall only just add here, that *Menippus's* account of Hell in *Lucian* (*Νυκτομαχία*) agrees in the general disposition of the place exactly with Virgil's account, and points out the same three regions and in the same order; the first for judgment, the second for punishment, and the third for rewards. The same writer in another place makes the same distinction of good, bad and indifferent, for the inhabitants of these three regions, and places the good in Elysium, the bad in Tartarus and the indifferent (which he says are most numerous) in the wide plains of Erebus."—SPENCE'S *Polymetis*, Dial. XVI.

[c] In *Dido*—*Sæviti amor magnoque irarum fluctuat æstu*.—Æn. IV.

Speaking of *Dido's* death the poet says,

————— *nec fato, "merita" nec morte peribat;*

Sed "*miserâ*" ante diem subitoque accensa furor.——Æn. IV.

and thus he seems to place her among the "*miserable*" rather than the wicked."

but a cowardly and effeminate refuge from the evils of life, only fit for women on any disappointment of their pusillanimous passions: whereas "fortitude" under every trial is the distinguishing characteristic of his great hero [D].

The opinions and conduct of Marcus Brutus shall engage our next attention. Brutus, (according to the relation of Plutarch in his life) though a proficient in all the sects of the Grecian philosophy, was most attached to the Platonists or ancient academy. He approved not at all of the principles of Carneades or the new academy, in which Cicero made so considerable a figure. In consequence of being much conversant in the Platonic writings and which contained also the opinions of Socrates, he had many scruples concerning the legality

When Amata, the wife of Latinus, had failed in her plan for the destruction of Æneas, whom she despised as an unworthy husband for her daughter Lavinia, and thought Turnus, whom she favoured, killed in battle, she gave herself up to despair and suicide.

————— subito mentem turbata dolore
 Se causam clamat crimenque caputque malorum :
 Multaque per mœstum demens effata furorem,
 Purpureos moritura manu discindit amictus
 Et nodum informis leti trabe nectit ab altâ.——ÆN. XII.

Virgil seems almost to have made another female suicide of the mother of Euryalus on hearing of her son's death.

————— in me omnia tela
 Conjicite, o Rutuli ; me primam absomite ferro.
 Aut tu, magne pater Divum, miserere, tuoque
 Invisum hoc detrude caput sub Tartara telo :
 " Quando aliter nequeo crudelem abruptere vitam."

Meaning perhaps, " since I have not resolution enough to kill myself."——ÆN. IX.

Anchises also wishes Æneas to leave him behind at his departure from Troy, and then he will kill himself.

————— Vos, o quibus integer ævi
 Sanguis, ait, solidæque suo stant robore vires ;
 Vos agitate fugam.
 Me si cœlicolæ voluissent ducere vitam
 Has mihi servassent sedes : fatis una superque
 Vidimus excidia et capte superavimus urbi.
 Sic o sic positum affati discedit corpore.
 Ipse manu mortem inveniam.——ÆN. II.

[D] Quicquid erit, superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est.——ÆN. V.

or propriety of suicide, and even condemned at the time the voluntary death of his uncle and father-in-law, the Utican Cato. But as the circumstances of his life changed and his fortunes became desperate, he also changed his opinion of suicide. For on the morning of the battle of Philippi, Brutus and Cassius are reported in his life of Brutus, to have holden the following conference.

Cassius. “ May the Gods grant, o Brutus, that this day we may prove victorious and spend the remainder of our lives together in comfort and happiness !
“ But since the event of human affairs, and especially of great ones, is most uncertain ; and since, if the battle should prove adverse, we may find a difficulty of ever meeting again, tell me, what is your opinion and resolution concerning putting ourselves to death ?

Brutus. “ When I was a youth, Cassius, and less engaged in active life and consequently less experienced, I embraced (I know not how) such sentiments of philosophy, as made me condemn Cato for killing himself. I then deemed it an act of irreverence towards the Gods, and which implied but little idea of valour among men, when we thus showed ourselves unwilling to submit to the dispensations of Providence, or unable to endure with firmness and resolution whatever misfortunes might fall to our lot. But now in the midst of danger I am quite of another mind. For if Providence does not terminate our present undertaking according to our wishes, I shall rest without further trial. I shall make no more preparations for war, but will die contented with my present fortune. I surrendered up my life to the service of my country on the ides of March, and have survived ever since only to enjoy liberty and honour.” At these words Cassius gave a smile of approbation and embracing Brutus said, “ With such resolutions let us meet the enemy ; for either we shall conquer ourselves, or have no cause to fear the victory of others.” The event of the battle is well known ; as likewise that both these great leaders fulfilled their previous determinations and fell [E] by their own swords. But this precipitation

[E] Cassius ordered his freedman to kill him (an usual mode of suicide in those days), which he executed by severing his head from his body. Brutus, after having taken an affectionate leave of his friends and having assured them, that he was only angry with fortune for his country's sake, since he esteemed himself in his death more happy than his conquerors, advised them to provide for their own

cipitation has been justly censured, in that they destroyed with themselves all remaining [F] hopes of the republic. Though Brutus observed to Cassius, that he had changed his opinion of suicide, yet he assigns no grounds or reasons, why he thought it more lawful than he had done before. The truth was, he began to grow desperate, and of course the deductions of his cooler reason appeared weak in proportion; and his judgment clashing now with his personal feelings, at length gave way and vanished before them. Such is the case with an infinite number of suicides at the present hour, who are not so honourable in their pursuits as the Roman patriot. Reason is lulled asleep by the irregularity of appetites, and religion yields to the impulses of passion, disappointment and despair.

Pliny the elder seems to have entertained very favourable notions of suicide; who writes thus in a chapter entitled "Of God." "The chief comfort of man in his imperfect state is this; that even the Deity cannot do all things. For instance, he cannot put himself to death when he pleases, which is the greatest indulgence he has given to man amid the fore evils of life [G]." Pliny like-

safety; and then retiring he used the assistance of his intimate Strato to run his sword through his body. This is Plutarch's account in his life. But Dion Cassius (Lib. XLVII.) puts the words of disappointment and chagrin into Brutus's mouth at his death, making him quote a passage from Euripides in his Hercules furens. "O wretched virtue, thou art a bare name! I mistook thee for a substance. But thou thyself art the slave of Fortune."

[F] "Cato (says Montesquieu in "Rise and Fall of Roman Empire," C. xii.) gave himself up to death at the end of the tragedy, but Brutus and Cassius before it; without compassion on that Republic which they thus abandoned."

[G] Imperfectæ verò naturæ in homine præcipua solatia, ne Deum quidem posse omnia. Nam neque sibi potest mortem consciscere si velit: quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitæ pœnis.—(NAT. HIST. L. II. C. vii.)

The heathens seem in more than one instance to have claimed a superiority over their Gods. Pliny here arrests a privilege to man beyond the power of the Gods to exercise. Seneca (Ep. liii.) also gives greater credit to his "wise" man than to the Deity; "Because the Deity is wise through his own nature, and cannot help being so; whereas man attains his wisdom by his own application." Est aliquid quo sapiens antecedit Deum. Ille naturæ beneficio, non suo, sapiens est. And Epicurus (or at least Lucretius for him) very civilly dismisses the Gods from all management of worldly affairs, for that indeed "they are not capable of undertaking such a business."

Ipsa * suâ per se sponte omnia Diis agere expers.
Nam (proh sancta Deum tranquillâ pectora pace
Quæ placidum degunt ævum vitamque serenam!)

* Scil. Natura.

Quis

" wise bestows high commendations on the kindness of mother Earth, who in
 " mere compassion to our miseries has produced such poisons [H], as will most
 " easily and pleasantly accomplish our death." These the great men of old
 usually carried about them against the vicissitudes of fortune [I]. Pliny, when
 writing of bodily pain or disorders, advances as follows. " Even folly itself
 " seems capable of determining, which are the most grievous disorders, since " his
 " own" seems to every one to be the worst to endure. But our ancestors have
 " judged, that the greatest of tortures is from stones in the bladder occasioning
 " strangury; the next from cramps in the stomach; the third from pains in the
 " head: and that it is from these chiefly that men seek relief in self-murder; such
 " is the condition of life, that death often becomes the most [K] desirable har-
 " bour." Pliny the elder, though not particularly addicted to any one system of
 philosophy, is said rather to have inclined to that of the Epicureans; and what is
 advanced above is very consistent with their notions. To become " non-existent"
 rather than live in violent pain and misery without hopes of relief is agreeable to
 Epicurean principles; but to claim the power of becoming so, as a privilege su-
 perior to that possessed by eternal beings supposed to be liable to no imperfection
 or trouble, and therefore wanting no means of escaping it, is too quaint and ab-
 surd a sophism to deserve further notice: and yet Hume [L] has thought this
 very passage from Pliny of sufficient weight and importance to close his whole
 Essay in favour of suicide.

Quis + regere immensi summam, quis habere profundi

Endo manu validas potis est moderanter habenas?

Quis pariter cœlos omnes convertere? et omneis

Ignibus ætheriis terras suffire feraceis?

Omnibus inque locis esse omni tempore præsto, &c. &c. L. II.

[H] Plinius Terram matrem etiam venena nostri misertam instituisse credi vult: ut scilicet facillimo
 haustu illibato corpore et cum toto sanguine extingueremur, nullo labore sentientibus similes.—NAT.
 HIST. L. II. C. iii.

[I] " Masinissa fidem e servis vocat, sub cujus custodia regio more ad incerta fortunæ venenum
 erat."—Liv. L. XXX. 15.

[K] Qui gravissimi ex his morbis sunt discerni stultitiâ prope videri potest, cum suus cuique ad præ-
 sens quique atrocissimus videatur. Et de hoc tamen judicavere avi experimento, asperimos cruciatus
 esse calculorum a stillicidio vesicæ, proximum stomachi, tertium eorum, qui in capite doleant, non ob
 alios ferè morte conscitâ: — quoniam ea vitæ conditio est, ut mori plerumque etiam optimi portus sit.
 — (NAT. HIST. L. XXV. C. iii.)

[L] See Part III. C. i. where this part of Hume's Essay is considered.

+ Scil. Deorum.

Pliny

Pliny the younger, of most elegant manners and amiable memory, speaks feelingly on the subject of suicide, which he scruples not to call "the most mournful kind of death." His sensibility indeed was suffering at the time from its perpetration by one of his best and most admired friends. The whole epistle (B. I. Ep. xii.) is filled with such traits of genuine tenderness and unaffected sorrow, as will readily excuse its introduction here, even under the disguise of an inadequate translation. "I have suffered the most dismal wreck, if that be an adequate expression for the loss I have sustained. Corellius Rufus is dead:—dead by his own hand, which agonizes [M] my grief. For that is the most lamentable kind of death, which neither proceeds from nature nor from fate. There is a source of comfort in the necessity of submission, when life is terminated by disease; but our grief is inconsolable for those, who have invited their own death, because we know they might have lived longer. The highest reason [N], which with the wise man is equivalent to necessity, compelled Corellius to execute this purpose, though he had the most powerful attractions towards life—an unfulfilled conscience, a most excellent character and great influence; besides these, a wife, a daughter, a grandchild, a sister, and amid all these dear pledges, true friends. But he laboured under so long and painful an illness, that these powerful encouragements to live were overcome by that reason, which prompted him to die. At the age of thirty-three (as I have heard him say) he was attacked by the gout. It was in him an hereditary disorder, whose violence he kept under while young by strict abstinence and temperance. He sustained its first attacks, as he advanced in years, by the mere vigour of his mind. I visited him (it was in the reign of Domitian) at a time when he was enduring incredible tortures; for the gout was not now confined to his feet, but had seized all his limbs. The attendants left his chamber, (for this was his rule, whenever any particular friend came to visit him) and his wife also, though a woman to be intrusted in any matter, did the same. After casting his eyes around him — "and why (says he) do you think I bear these torments so long? Only in hopes of surviving that public robber, (meaning Domitian) though but for a day. O that my strength of

[M] The expression in the original is—*quod exulcerat dolorem meum*.

[N] Pliny here begins to apologize for his friend on stoical principles, but at the same time sets forth the reasons, which he had to have continued in life, with so much energy and affection, as seems more to imply Pliny's wish, that Rufus had yielded to them.

"body

"body were but equal to my will, and my wish should be accomplished!"
 "Heaven granted his desire of outliving the tyrant; and now having nothing
 "more to wish for, but knowing that he should die in security and freedom,
 "he broke [o] through his many, but less ties of life. His disorder had been
 "increasing, which he had endeavoured to mitigate by temperance; but his re-
 "solution forsook him on its continuance. It was now the fourth day of his
 "abstinence from food, when his wife sent me a most sorrowful message—that
 "Corellius had determined to die; that her own and her daughter's entreaties
 "were of no avail, and that nothing was left but to try "my" solicitations to
 "recall him to life. I ran and was now just at hand, when a second message from
 "his wife informed me, that even my entreaties would now be useless, so obsti-
 "nately was he hardened in his resolution of dying. When his physician would
 "have pressed some sustenance upon him, he cried out "I am resolved;" (*κηρυγμα*)
 "—a speech which raised an equal share of admiration and anxiety in my mind.
 "I think on the friend and on the man whom I have lost. I know he had com-
 "pleted his sixty-seventh year, an age of respectable length even to the most robust.
 "I know he is escaped from perpetual sickness. I know he died with all his
 "friends about him and left the state (dearer to him than all) in a flourishing
 "condition. I know all this, and yet I grieve for his death, as much as if he
 "had been young and in full health. But I grieve principally (think me weak if
 "you please) [p] on my own account. I have lost, I have lost the witness, guide
 "and governor of my conduct, and I fear I shall live more carelessly in future.
 "Administer then consolation to me—not that he was old, that he was infirm;—
 "I know, I know all this;—but something new, something great; such as I
 "never heard or read before. All that I have heard or read offers spontaneously,
 "but is overwhelmed in the excess of my sorrow." The touches of grief in this
 epistle are truly tender; and Pliny spoke the sentiments of every feeling heart on
 this subject, when he described self-murder to be the most [q] deplorable and
 dreadful of all kinds of death.

[o] Pliny here speaks stoically, as in the person of his friend rather than as advancing his own opinion of these ties of life.

[p] For a fuller account of the character of Corellius Rufus and of Pliny's connexion with him, see B. IV. Ep. xvii.

See also the suicide of Silius Italicus, the Poet, by abstinence from food on account of illness, described and his character drawn in B. III. Ep. vii.

[q] See this point fully opened in Part II. C. i.

In another epistle (B. I. xxii.) Pliny writes thus. " The long and obstinate
 " illness of Titus Aristo, whom I sincerely admire and love, disturbs me much.
 " He lately entreated me and a few more of his dearest friends to consult his
 " physicians concerning the probable determination of his disorder; — that if it
 " were deemed incurable, he might voluntarily deprive himself of life; but if it
 " were only likely to prove a long and difficult case, that he might bear it and
 " remain amongst us. For that he thought it incumbent on him to yield to the
 " prayers of a wife, the tears of a daughter and the feelings of us his friends, so
 " as not to frustrate all our hopes by a voluntary death, provided those hopes had
 " any tolerable foundation. Such a conduct I hold to be especially arduous and
 " exalted. For to run headlong into death by a blind kind of instinct is com-
 " mon to many; but to deliberate and weigh well the causes, and either to em-
 " brace or lay aside the counsel of death, as reason advises, is the part of a noble
 " mind. The opinions of the physicians were favourable; and it only remains
 " for the Deity to be propitious to our vows." Herein we see Pliny giving
 in to that idea of suicide, which alone can be effectually confuted on the
 principles of true religion.

It yet remains to notice what is to be found in the writings of Josephus re-
 specting suicide, who in his third book of the Jewish wars relates as follows.
 " That after the Roman arms had been successful in Judæa, he, being at that
 " time a principal commander of the Jewish army, was for delivering himself
 " up to the conquerors; being encouraged thereto (as he relates) by certain
 " dreams and visions, which assured him, that the Romans were to possess
 " Judæa. Since it pleaseth thee, o God, (was the purport of his resolution)
 " who hast created the Jewish nation, to depress the same; and since all their
 " good fortune is gone over to the Romans; and since thou hast made choice of
 " this soul of mine to foretell what is to come to pass hereafter; I willingly give
 " them my hands and am content to live." And I protest openly, that I do not
 " go over to the Romans, as a deserter of the Jews, but as a minister from thee."
 Fired with indignation at this treachery of their general (as it must needs appear
 to the Jews) the soldiers flocked around him and said; " Now indeed may the
 " laws of our forefathers, which God himself ordained, well groan to purpose:
 " that God we mean, who hath created the souls of the Jews of such a temper,
 " that they despise death! O Josephus, art thou still fond of life? canst thou
 bear

" bear to see the light in a state of slavery ? How soon hast thou forgotten thyself ?
 " how many hast thou persuaded to lose their lives for liberty ? But though the
 " good fortune of the Romans has made thee forget thyself, we ought to take
 " care, that the glory of our forefathers be not tarnished. We will lend thee
 " our right hand and a sword. If thou wilt die willingly, thou shalt die as ge-
 " neral of the Jews ; but if unwillingly, thou shalt die as a traitor to them."

Upon this Josephus was afraid " of their attacking him, and yet thought he
 " should be a betrayer of the commands of God, if he died before they were
 " delivered. So notwithstanding the distress he was in, he began to talk to
 " them in the following terms. O my friends, why are we so earnest to kill
 " ourselves ? why do we set our soul and body, which are such dear companions
 " at such variance ? It is a brave thing to die in war ; but it should be by the
 " hands of the enemy, our conquerors. If therefore I avoid death from the
 " sword of the Romans, I am truly worthy to be killed by my own sword and
 " my own hands. But if they admit of mercy and would spare their enemy,
 " how much more ought we to have mercy upon ourselves ? It is a foolish thing
 " to do that to ourselves, which we quarrel with them for doing to us. It is a
 " brave thing indeed to die for liberty, but still it should be in battle, and by
 " those, who would take that liberty from us. He is equally a coward who will not
 " die (bravely), when he is obliged to die, and he, who will die, when he is
 " not obliged to it. What are we afraid of, when we will not go up and meet
 " the Romans ? Is it death ? why then inflict it on ourselves ? You say, we
 " must be slaves ; are we then in a clear state of liberty at present ? But it is
 " manly, you say, to kill oneself. No certainly. I should esteem that pilot
 " an errant coward, who out of fear of a storm, should sink his ship of his own
 " accord. But self-murder is a crime most remote from the common nature of
 " all animals, and an instance of impiety against God our creator. No animal
 " dies by its own contrivance or with its own consent. The desire of life is a
 " law engraven in them all. On which account we deem those, who openly
 " take life away, our enemies, and those, who do it by treachery are punished
 " for so doing. From God we have received our being, and we ought to leave
 " it to his pleasure to take it away. The bodies of men are mortal and created
 " out of corruptible matter ; the soul is immortal and a portion of that divinity,
 " which inhabits in our bodies. If any one destroy or abuse a deposit he has received
 " from a mere man, he is esteemed a wicked and perfidious person : how then

“ can we cast out the divine deposit of our souls without offence? Our law ordains the punishment of slaves, who run away even from bad masters, and shall we run away from God the best of masters, and expect impunity or not think ourselves guilty of impiety? Do not you know that those, who depart out of this life according to the law of nature, and pay that debt, which was received from God, when he that lent it us is pleased to require it back again, enjoy eternal fame; that their houses and their posterity are established; that their souls are pure and obedient, and obtain a most holy place in heaven; from whence in the revolution of ages they are again sent into pure bodies; whilst the souls of those, whose hands have acted madly against themselves, are received into the darkest place of Ades? For which reason God hates such doings; and the crime is punished by our most wise legislator. Accordingly our laws [R] determine, that the bodies of such as kill themselves should be exposed till the sun be set without burial. The laws of other nations also enjoin such mens’ hands to be cut off, when they are dead, which had been made use of in destroying themselves when alive; while they reckoned, that as the body is alien from the soul, so is the hand alien from the body. It is a right thing, my friends, to reason justly, and not add to the calamities men bring on us our own impiety towards our Creator. If we have a mind to preserve ourselves, let us do it; for to be preserved by those our enemies, to whom we have given so many demonstrations of our courage, is no way inglorious. But if we have a mind to die it is good to die by the hand of those, who have [s] conquered us.”

Such were the motives urged by Josephus to prevent these soldiers from murdering him and themselves. But their ears were shut against all conviction, both on account of their irritation against their general himself and a desperation of their own affairs. Rushing in on Josephus, they gave him every opprobrious appellation and seemed ready to fall on him with their swords. But having extricated himself by various methods of address from instant death, he prevailed on them to listen to the following proposal. “ Come on (says he) ! and since it is resolved amongst you, that you will die, let us commit our mutual deaths

[R.] This must have been some custom superinduced on the law of Moses, as the law itself mentions no such thing.

[s.] See some of Josephus’s arguments noticed in Chap. on Donne, Part VI. Chap. i.

“ to a determination by lot. Let him on whom the first lot falls be killed by him, who hath the second ; and the second by the third ; and thus fortune shall make its progress through us all. Nor thus shall any of us perish by his own hand, except the last man, in whom it would be most ignominious to think of saving himself.” This proposal being accepted, he also drew his lot with the rest. He, who had the first lot, cheerfully submitted his neck to him, who had the second, and so on : and the thoughts that their general (whom they greatly loved) would die among them and with them, made them eager for their turn. It happened however that Josephus and one other soldier only were left to draw lots ; and as the general was very desirous, neither to imbrue his own hand in the blood of his countryman, nor to be condemned by lot himself, he persuaded the soldier to trust his fidelity, and to live as well as himself. Thus ended this tragical scene, and Josephus immediately surrendered himself up to Vespasian.”

Though Josephus here makes use of all the principal Socratic arguments against suicide, and also adds some others of his own ; yet it does not at all appear, that he himself was firmly persuaded by them. He desired at that time to live, as having predictions to declare to Vespasian, concerning his future exaltation to the Roman empire, of which there was not at that time the most distant prospect. These divine inspirations (concerning the nature of which it is not our business here to inquire) occupied his soul, and led him into actions to preserve his life, which he would otherwise probably have voluntarily sacrificed on the above occasion. For this seems rather to have been his natural opinion, by the speech he made to Vespasian soon after. “ Thou, o Vespasian, thinkest no more than that thou hast taken Josephus himself captive. But I come to thee, as a messenger of greater tidings. For had I not been sent by God to thee, “ I knew what was the law of the Jews in this case ; and how it becomes generals to die.” But I deserve to be kept under strait confinement, till it shall appear, whether I affirm any thing rashly as coming from God.” Now as it no where appears in the law of Moses, that Jewish commanders or soldiers were obliged to kill themselves rather than go into slavery under heathens (as is here intimated by Josephus, and will be hereafter by Eleazar) it was only some vain doctrine or interpretation of some rigid Jewish sectaries, and was grounded on a notion of Jewish pride, “ that the Almighty was disgraced by the bondage of his chosen people.”

There is also another passage in Josephus's History of the Jewish War (B. VII.), in which the commander of that day was as urgent for the complicated practice of murder and suicide, in order to avoid falling into the enemies' hands, as Josephus had been against it. This respects the behaviour of Eleazar, the commander of those bands of Jews called Sicarii, who were closely besieged by the Roman general in the strong fortress of Masada. When the Romans had now nearly destroyed all the works, and there seemed scarce a possibility of the besieged escaping death or at least captivity, Eleazar consulted about first killing their wives and children, and then themselves; and collecting the most courageous of his companions, he addressed them to the following purport.

" Since long ago, my generous friends, we resolved never to serve the Romans, or any other than God himself, the time is now come, which obliges us to make that resolution good in practice. Let us not at this time bring the reproach of contradiction on ourselves. I cannot but esteem it a mark of God's favour, that it is still in our power to die bravely and in a state of freedom. It is very plain that we must be taken in a day's time, but still it is an eligible thing to die after a glorious manner with our dearest friends. This is what our enemies themselves cannot hinder, though they be very desirous of taking us alive. But let us not receive our punishments from the Romans, but from God himself, as executed by our own hands. These will be more moderate than the other. Let our wives die before they are abused, and our children before they have tasted of slavery. And after we have slain them, let us bestow that glorious benefit upon one another mutually, and preserve ourselves in freedom, as an excellent funeral monument for us."

However Eleazar did not find the above harangue work the effect he expected, and there still seemed a murmuring and backwardness to execute these bloody projects. He therefore renewed his harangue in the following manner. " Truly (says he) I was greatly mistaken in imagining, that I was leagued with brave men, who struggled hard for liberty, and with such as were resolved either to live with honour or to die. But I find that you are no better than others in virtue or courage, and are afraid of dying, though you be delivered thereby from the greatest miseries. You ought to make no delay in this matter, not even to wait for advice. For the laws of our country ("but quære, where?")

" and

“ and of God himself, have from ancient times, and as soon as ever we could
 “ use our reason, continually taught us; and our forefathers have corroborated
 “ the same doctrine by their actions and bravery of mind;—that it is life, which
 “ is a calamity to men, and not death. For this last affords our souls their
 “ liberty, and sends them by a removal into their own place of purity, where
 “ they are to be insensible of all sorts of misery.” (He then enters into a dis-
 quisation of the nature of the soul and body, in which it is not necessary here to
 follow him, and thus proceeds,) “ But why are we afraid of death, while we are
 “ pleased with the rest we take in sleep? and how absurd a thing is it to pursue
 “ after liberty while we are alive, and yet to envy it to ourselves, where it will
 “ be eternal? We therefore, who have been brought up in a discipline of our
 “ own, ought to become an example to others in our readiness to die. Yet if
 “ we stand in need of foreigners to support us in this matter, let us regard those
 “ Indians, who profess the exercise of philosophy. For these good men do but
 “ unwillingly undergo the time of life, and look upon it as a necessary servitude,
 “ and make haste to let their souls loose from their bodies. Nay, when no
 “ necessity presses them to it or drives them upon it, these have such a desire of
 “ a life of immortality, that they tell other men beforehand that they are about
 “ to depart: and nobody hinders them. But every one thinks them happy men,
 “ and gives them letters to be carried to their familiar friends, who are dead.
 “ So when these men have heard all, they deliver their bodies to the fire; and
 “ in order to their getting their soul a separation from the body in the greatest
 “ purity, they die in the midst of hymns and commendations. For their dearest
 “ friends conduct them to their death more readily than the rest of mankind
 “ conduct out their fellow-citizens, who are going a long journey. Who at
 “ the same time weep on their own accounts, but look on the others as happy
 “ persons, soon to be made partakers of the immortal order of beings. Are we
 “ not therefore ashamed to have lower notions than these Indians? and by our
 “ own cowardice to lay a base reproach upon the laws of our country, which
 “ are so much desired and imitated by all mankind? But put the case, that we
 “ had been brought up under another persuasion and taught, that life is the
 “ greatest good, which men are capable of, and that death is a calamity; how-
 “ ever the circumstances we are now in ought to be an inducement to us to
 “ bear such calamity courageously: since it is by the will of God and by ne-
 “ cessity that we are to die. Let us then make haste to die bravely. Let us
 “ pity

“ pity ourselves, our wives, our children, whilst it is in our power to show
 “ them pity. Let us die before we become slaves to our enemies; and let us
 “ go out of the world with our wives and children in a state of freedom. This
 “ is that our laws command us to do; this is that our wives and children claim
 “ at our hands; and God himself hath brought this necessity upon us (mean-
 “ ing by suffering the Romans to conquer them). Let us make haste; and
 “ instead of affording our enemies the pleasure they expect from getting us into
 “ their power, let us leave them an example, which shall at once cause their
 “ astonishment at our deaths and their admiration of our hardiness therein.”

Now this harangue (which was probably dressed up by Josephus) must be
 supposed to contain the opinions of the Jews at that time concerning the pro-
 priety and necessity of suicide on such occasions as the above. But the effect of
 whatever was said by Eleazar is thus recorded by his historian. “ Now as
 “ Eleazar was proceeding in his exhortation, they cut him short and made
 “ haste to do the work; being full of an ungovernable ardour of mind, and
 “ seized with a demoniacal fury. Nor indeed when it came to the work itself
 “ did their zeal fail. They held fast their resolution, (being convinced by the
 “ arguments of Eleazar, that they were doing a right thing in liberating their
 “ families from the horrors of slavery) when they came into the presence of
 “ their wives and children; and after tenderly embracing them completed what
 “ they had resolved on, as if they had been executed by the hands of strangers.
 “ Nor was there a man, who scrupled to perform his part in this terrible exe-
 “ cution, or who refused to despatch (under such a miserable necessity) his
 “ nearest relations. But when they had done this, deeming it an injury to
 “ survive them a moment, they chose ten men by lot, who were to slay all the
 “ rest. Each laid himself down by his own wife and children, and embracing
 “ their dead bodies stretched his neck for the executioner to perform his me-
 “ lancholy office. But when these ten men had without dismay killed all the
 “ rest, they cast lots among themselves, who should kill the surviving nine
 “ and after all himself. The nine offered their necks in the same manner;
 “ and when these were despatched, the survivor took a last survey of all the
 “ bodies, lest any one should not be quite despatched; but when he found they
 “ were all dead, he first set fire to every thing around him, and then running
 “ his sword through his own body fell down dead near his own relations. Two
 “ ancient

“ ancient women alone and five children had concealed themselves in caverns
 “ under ground and lay hidden there, whilst the others were intent on their
 “ mutual slaughter. The number thus slain in this species of self-murder was
 “ nine hundred and sixty, women and children included.” This calamitous
 slaughter was made about An. Dom. 73. One could scarce credit the relation,
 were it not to be recollected, that “ the finger of God” (for causes well known)
 was in all that concerned the destruction of the Jewish polity, the desolation
 of the land, and the unparalleled sufferings of its sinful inhabitants.

It is now time to close this part of our inquiry into the opinions of the ancients;
 and the substance of what has been collected is as follows.—The wise of all
 sects agreed, that death was neither timidly to be feared nor rashly invited;
 that an endeavour to avoid death was always commendable, when it did not
 proceed from a desire of living basely; and a readiness to die was equally good
 and virtuous [T], provided it arose not from a mere contempt of life. They all
 of them (the Epicureans alone excepted, who discarded all interference of the
 Gods in human affairs) allowed occasions that might be interpreted into “ per-
 missions or orders of the Deity” to quit life by voluntary violence: but without
 such a permission indicated by some outward circumstances of life, no sect seems
 to have acknowledged the expediency or innocence of suicide. The great differ-
 ence between them lies in determining the nature and extent of these permissions.
 Some confined them within such narrow limits, as almost, if not totally, ex-
 cluded the perpetration of what could properly be called a voluntary suicide on
 any occasion. The prohibition of the Deity from retiring out of life, according
 to the Pythagoric and Socratic opinions, seems applicable to every instance in
 which we could preserve life with innocence; and consequently the permission

[T] See Plutarch in the beginning of his life of Pelopidas, who has some good reflections to the
 same purpose.

The Emperor Julian also on his death-bed (after having received a mortal wound in battle) said as
 follows. “ I now offer my tribute of gratitude to the eternal Being, who has not suffered me to perish
 “ by the cruelty of a tyrant, by the secret dagger of conspiracy, or by the slow tortures of a lingering
 “ disease. He has given me in the midst of an honourable career, a splendid and glorious departure
 “ from this world: and I hold it equally absurd, equally base, to solicit or to decline, the stroke of
 “ fate.”—See GIBBON'S Rom. Hist. Vol. IV. 8vo. p. 201, who translates from Ammianus.

of the Deity is only implied, when we cannot help dying by our own hands, or acting in disobedience to some other great rule of our duty. An instance and illustration of this doctrine is clearly exhibited in the death of Socrates himself. He was commanded by the laws of his country "to drink poison;" by doing which he became in some measure his own executioner. He might have refused to do it voluntarily, and might have compelled his judges to have put him to death in some way or other "without his own interference." But here he discovers the permission of the Deity to administer to his own death rather than to give up his innocency, or to show himself disobedient to the laws of his country. But as the Socratic philosophy began to be crumbled into sects, these supposed commands or intimations of the Deity concerning self-destruction became of more extensive interpretation. Aristotle indeed writes pointedly against self-murder, as deserving the highest censure and ignominy: but he considers it solely as an offence against the state, not as either impugning the authority of God, or as being injurious to the interests of self. Plato much enlarges the leave; and Zeno extends it to a great length. Suicide was a favourite doctrine of the Stoics, though not without a difference of interpretation among themselves. Still however among them there was always to be a permission or order from the Deity before they could innocently destroy themselves. Their own murder was not to be perpetrated on every slight pretence, or fled to as a justifiable conclusion of an ill-spent life. There was to be a previous dignity of character in the self-murderer, as well as a fitness in the moment of execution, which alone could justify an end, which the Stoics ever regarded under such circumstances, as peculiarly honourable. The followers of Socrates seem to have been of opinion, that they were strictly to adhere themselves to the paths of virtue and social utility, and to preserve their lives, as long as ever they could with innocence, in order to prolong their opportunities of doing good; and that they were patiently to submit to every kind of persecution and even to the imposition of death itself on themselves (as an external circumstance they could not avoid) rather than desert their just opinions and honourable practices. The followers of Zeno also allowed, that they were to pursue every thing that was great, disinterested and noble; but if stopped in their career of utility to their fellow-citizens by any externals they could not avoid, they were to give over the pursuit and voluntarily to retire from life. Thus the Socratic adhered with
modesty

modesty and firmness to whatever was good; and if opposed and persecuted still persisted in his course, hoping for better times and patiently enduring for the truth's sake. While the Stoic on the contrary, if not able to maintain his usual dignity in the pursuit of virtue, was indignant at opposition, and by sacrificing his life, not only fled from his own existence here, but from all future protection of the cause of virtue in his own person. Had the generality of mankind been philosophers [u] like themselves, the behaviour of the Stoics in this point would have been more justifiable; or rather in such a case they would have met with few occasions of rousing their indignation against life. But in the mixed state of mankind, where folly triumphs so much and so often over wisdom, the perseverance of the Socratics, even beyond the stoical point of dying, was much more for the benefit and advantage of society.

As the Epicureans discarded their Deities from every concern or attention to human affairs, they could pretend to no leave from above about the matter. With them a man was to live as long as he could in tranquillity and indolence; and when that condition of life failed him without hope of recovery, he was to depart hence and to sink into annihilation, as soon as he pleased. The followers of Carneades reasoned for or against suicide, as it best suited the argument they were upon; and practised it or otherwise on the principles of that sect, to which they rather inclined. Thus Stoical-Academics (if such an expression be warrantable) would plead a dismissal, whenever their dignity was affronted or their glory diminished; whilst Epicurean-Academics would care nothing about such matters, as long as their personal indolence and tranquillity was not superseded. One philosopher [x] there was of extraordinary scepticism, who maintaining, "that to live or die was the same thing," was asked, "wherefore then do you not kill yourself?" "Precisely (answered he) for this very reason, because there is no difference between life and death."

Though upon the whole then the opinions of the ancient philosophers (a few excepted, but those evidently of the better sort) must be adjudged to be favourable to suicide in many cases, yet let not the modern self-murderer offer to hold

[u] The great error of Stoicism was the being so much wrapped up in the dignity of self.

[x] This was Pyrrho of Elis in Peloponnesus;—the author of Pyrrhonism and Atheism.

up his head on the notion of his being acquitted by such respectable authority. For in the first place its most strenuous advocates the Stoics allowed not its perpetration, as a refuge from crimes and vices; and therefore they would have excluded the bulk of modern self-murderers from all connexion with their sect: so that at best the present race of suicides could only have ranked with the gross herd of Epicurus. Again; it must ever be remembered, that the ancients were surrounded with difficulties and uncertainties relative to a future state; and that therefore their reasonings on these points were proportionably vague, contradictory [v] and erroneous. They reasoned however as well as the dim glimmerings of natural light enabled them to do; and would the moderns but make as good use of their superior advantages, they could not but draw more firm and stable conclusions than many of the sages of antiquity did, concerning the nature of God, of the soul, and of futurity; and consequently of the basis of social union, moral obligation and religious duty:—all which evidently tend not only to discountenance, but to reprobate the practice of self-murder.

[v] Multi ex iis philosophis, quia æternas esse animas suspicabantur, tanquam in cælum migraturi essent sibi ipsis manus contulerunt: ut Cleanthes, ut Chrysippus, ut Zeno, ut Empedocles. Homicidæ igitur illi omnes philosophi, & ipse Romanæ sapientiæ Cato, qui antiquam se occideret, perlegisse Platonis librum dicitur, qui est scriptus de æternitate animarum; & ad summum nefas philosophi auctoritate compulsus est; & hic tamen aliquam moriendi causam videtur habuisse—odium servitutis. Quid Ambraciotes ille Cleombrotus, cum eundem librum perlegisset, præcipitem se dedit nullam aliam ob causam, nisi quod Platoni crediderit? Execrabilis prorsus ac fugienda doctrina, si abigit homines e vitâ. Quod si scisset Plato atque docuisset, a quo & quomodo, & quibus, & quæ ob facta & quo tempore immortalitas tribuatur, nec Cleombrotum impegisset in mortem voluntariam nec Catonem; sed eos ad vitam & justitiam potius erudisset.—LACTANTIUS Div. Inst. L. III. sect. 18. De falsâ Sapientiâ.

Lactantius in this passage infers, that even the philosophy, which formerly led to think the soul immortal, was a pernicious sort of wisdom, because it frequently led its abettors to commit the foul crime of suicide, in order to enjoy immortality so much the sooner.

C H A P. VI.

Theban law against suicide.—Athenian law.—The bodies of unjustifiable suicides in Greece were buried in some pit, not burned with the usual solemnities.—The refusal of the usual funeral rites to the body of a suicide, a great mark of abhorrence of the practice; as is also the company with which the suicide is joined in this prohibition.—Cean custom of asking leave of the magistrate to destroy oneself.—Massilian the same.—The idea herein, that man's life belongs not to himself, but to the state.—Declamations of Quintilian and Libanius grounded on the idea of asking leave of the senate.—Demonassa of Cyprus, her law against suicide, as given by Dion Chrysostom in his sixty-fourth oration.—Punishment of suicide at Miletus in Ionia.

AN attention has hitherto been paid only to the “opinions” of some sages of antiquity concerning suicide; but it will be necessary to make a further inquiry into what laws or customs were actually established in ancient states on this head. By the laws of Thebes suicides were to have no honours paid to their [z] memory; but they were to be branded with infamy and their bodies to be deprived of the accustomed funeral solemnities. The Athenian law on this head is pointed; “Let the hand which committed the suicide [A] be cut off and buried apart from the rest of the body:”—as having been such an enemy and traitor to it. But the only burial allowed to the suicide was ignominious and disgraceful, being neither to be performed with the usual solemnities nor in the accustomed places. The bodies of unjustifiable suicides were not burned to ashes according to the Grecian custom, but were privately buried under ground; it being deemed a pollution of the holy element of fire to con-

[z] Hinc factum est, ut lege Thebanorum, αυτοχειρες notarentur infamiâ refert ex Aristotele Zenobius, Cent. VI. Prov. 17. φασι δὲ, ὅτι ἐν Θηβαίς δι' αὐτοὺς ἀναγκαστὲς νόμους τιμῆς μετείχετο, καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ φησὶ περὶ Θηβαίων το αὐτο τετο, ὅτι τὰς αυτοχειρὰς ἰαυτῶν ὑπομένει ἐκ ἐπιμῶν.—PETITI Commentarius in Leges Atticas, p. 523.

[A] Εὰν τις αὐτοῦ διαχρησθῇ—τὴν χεῖρα τετο πράξαντα ἀποκοπῇ καὶ χεὶρ τῇ σφαματὶ θάπτην.—PETITI Commentarius in Leges Atticas.

sume those carcasses in it, which had thus basely deserted the interests [B] and service of themselves and their country. When it is recollected, what a pious and earnest zeal was shown by the Greeks in respect of funeral [c] rites;—that it was esteemed by them worse than death, not to have their ashes buried in the tombs of their ancestors, and that the consequence of a failure in the usual modes of interment were so much to be dreaded,—it appears, that the guilt of suicide must be very grievous in their sight, who could assign it so severe a punishment. Indeed some further judgment may be formed concerning the idea entertained of the heinousness of this crime, by the company with which the self-murderer is joined in the refusal of the accustomed funeral solemnities; viz. “with the public or private enemy, with the traitor and conspirator against his country, with the tyrant, the sacrilegious wretch, and such grievous offenders, whose punishment was impalement alive on a cross.” (See Potter’s *Antiq.*) These laws however, it may be supposed, were either grown obsolete or not rigidly executed in later times, as there were so many excepted cases, even by Plato himself, in which suicide was deemed no crime and in consequence liable to no punishment. Indeed the principal case on which its guilt was established (a cowardly faint-heartedness) was very hard to be proved after a man’s decease, or to be separated from a fear of that shame and ignominy, which was one allowed cause of its commission.

However it is plain, that the Aristotelian idea of suicide, as being an offence against the state, prevailed among the inhabitants of the island of Ceos. For there was a law in that island, that every one should ask leave of the magistrates, and at the same time give in his reasons for wishing to destroy himself; which

[B] Εβόλῃ δὲ αὐτοῦ (scil. Ajacem) καταβήμεναι ἐς τὴν γῆν τοῦ σπῆμα, εἰρηγυμένῳ Καλχάντῳ, ὡς ἐκ δόκον περιβαπτεῖσθαι, ἢ ταυτοῖς ἀποκτείναντες. Sepeliverunt autem Ajacem humi corpus deponentes, Calchante interpretante impium esse, ut ii igne sepeliantur, qui sibi manum conscivere.—PHILOSTRATI *Heroica*, p. 695.

[c]. The greatest imprecation among the Greeks was, “May you die and be destitute of burial!” which was in consequence of an opinion, that unburied ghosts were never admitted into Elysium.—See POTTER’S *Greek Antiq.* B. IV. c. i.

Ælian says (Var. *Hist.* L. IV. c. vii.) ἐκ τῆς ἀρᾶς τοῦ κακῆς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀποθανῶν κέρδος, ἐπὶ μὲν τότε ἀναπαύονται, ἀλλ’ ἢ παιδείας ἀμοιβὴν ταῖς, ἢ καὶ ἐκ φθόρων ταῖς, ὧς καὶ ἐκ τῆς τελευταίας τιμῆς καὶ τῆς κοινῆς πατρὸς σωματικῶν ἔργων καὶ κινήσεως ἐκπύονται. Hoc est. Ne in morte quidem scelerosis hominibus aliquid lucri propositum est, quoniam neque tunc possunt quiescere. Sed aut prorsus destituuntur sepulturâ, aut quamvis sepeliantur, tamen supremum honorem & communem omnium corporum portum amittunt.

if approved, he publicly drank a preparation of poison kept for that purpose; but no one was to presume to kill himself without previous permission. Valerius Maximus tells us, (L. II. c. vi.) "that when he was attending Sextus Pompeius into Asia, he was present at a ceremony of this sort. It was the voluntary sacrifice of a woman of distinction on the island, who had satisfied the magistrates of the propriety of her suicide for the following reasons:— that she had passed her ninetyeth year in an uninterrupted course of health and vigour of body and mind; that fortune had smiled on her in every instance of life; that she had a numerous family, and was in every respect contented and happy: she had only to fear some reverse of fortune by seeming any longer to be covetous of life. The entreaties and eloquence of Pompey could not prevail on her to live after leave obtained to die; but she was pleased to think that her death would be graced by the eclat of Pompey's presence [D]."

[D] Ælian in his Various History (B: III. c. xxxviii.) tells us, "that there was a law among the Cæans, who inhabited an island in the Ægean sea, that every one, who had arrived at a considerable old age, should swallow the hemlock-draught, (which was publicly kept for such purposes) being crowned and adorned as for a feast or sacrifice. That this should be done, whenever a person became sensible, that his life could be no longer serviceable to his country, and that his faculties began to fail him."

Strabo also mentions (Geog. B. X.) "that among the inhabitants of Ceos, a law seems to have been established, that those citizens, whose age exceeded seventy years, should live no longer to consume those provisions, which younger people might want." But the Cean lady's case (mentioned by Valerius Maximus) is a sufficient proof, either that this law was partially executed, or (which is still more probable) that it was only a temporary expedient of necessity during some siege or grievous famine.

Meminit & Heraclides Ponticus De Politis (speaking of Cæans) *ἡ περιμενοῖσι χρόνῳ τελευτῆν, ἀλλὰ πρὶν αὐθινοῖσι ἢ περιθνήσκειν τι, ὅτι μὴ μακρὸν, ὅτι δὲ καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐξάγῃσι.* Hoc est, senio confecti mortem non expectant, sed antequam adversâ valetudine corripiantur, alii papavere, alii cicutâ sibi ipsis mortem acceperunt.—Cæterum qui fortunam secundam spontaneâ morte finiverint, priusquàm in adversam incidere, pauciores reperiuntur. Ex hoc tamen more intelligendum est illud Plauti in Pænulo, Act I. Scen. 2.

Ag. ————— Abi domum ac suspende te.

Mi. Quamobrem? *Ag.* Quia nunquam audibis verba tot tam suavia.

Quid tibi opus est vixisse? Ausculta mihi modo ac suspende te.

Et illud Terentii Eunuchæ, Act III. Scen. 5. ubi Chærea loquitur.

Jamne erumpere hoc licet mihi gaudium? Proh Jupiter!

Nunc est profectò interfici cum perpeti me possum:

Ne hoc gaudium contamine vita ægritudine aliqua.

KIRCHMAN. Appendix ad Libros De Funeribus Romanorum.

The

The same custom relative to suicide prevailed also among the Massilians or ancient inhabitants of Marfeilles; which Valerius Maximus says was transplanted from Greece into Gaul (L. II. c. vi.) A preparation of hemlock was publicly kept in the city of Massilia, and all, who had any thoughts of self-destruction, were to apply to the senate for leave to use it; assigning at the same time their reasons for thus inviting death. On these the senate deliberated and adjudged the citizen to live or die according to their own wisdom. "Such a discussion (observes Valerius) is tempered with a manly benevolence; which does not suffer any one to quit life rashly, but affords means of accelerating the end of him, who has wise reasons for his departure. Any one for instance may thus make an approved and honourable exit, who experiences the extremes of good or bad fortune; either of which affords sufficient grounds to covet a termination of life—the former lest it should forsake us or the latter continue with us." In any age of heathenism much addicted to suicide, such a law might truly be said to be tempered [E] with wisdom; and if carefully observed might certainly prevent much self-destruction. One point is also clear from this account, that the Cceans and Massilians both adjudged the power of a man over his own life to rest—not in himself, but in the voice of the magistrate, who alone was to determine, how his life or death might affect the state.

This custom of asking leave of the magistrate seems to have been well known and to have extended itself beyond the small territories of Ceos and Massilia;

[E] "There was, as appears to my mind, more solid wisdom in this custom than at first strikes the eye. The public magistrate, by thus becoming the confessor, adviser, and friend of the miserable, pitying the miseries and feeling for the infirmities of human nature, was enabled to give advice, consolation, and relief, which would supersede all those impatient wishings for death, and reconcile the citizens again to life: but in cases where consolation and relief were desperate and not possible (of which the prudence of the public magistrate and not the feverish mind of the individual was to judge); in cases where a man's misfortunes had rendered him a burden to himself and useless to the public, they permitted the act of suicide, as a public act, to be done under the public eye. There is no account in history, or by any anecdotes, of the effect of this custom. But one might venture to say, that amongst a people of such temper and spirit, where regulations about suicide were become necessary, this was the most effectual guard against it; and there would be very few instances of self-murder, where the poor wretch was thus permitted to reason and advise with the public magistrate about it."—Extract from Governor Pownall's "Notices and Descriptions of Antiquities of the Provincia Romana of Gaul:" where he is describing the customs of the Phocceans, who settled at Massilia.

since it exercised the oratorical powers of several masters of rhetoric, and gave birth to many a spirited declamation in old times. They are fictitious indeed, but from being supposed to be addressed in full form to an assembled senate, they seem to show, that such an idea of asking leave was not new, but familiar in those days. The Declamations of Quintilian, who lived in the reigns of the latter Cæsars, were exercises of his scholars and himself, not real pleadings. The subject of the "fourth," entitled "Pro filio" is this. A father had consulted an astrologer on the future fortunes of his infant-son; and he received for answer, that he would prove a brave and great man, but in the end would kill his father. This son, after the performance of several great actions, by which he seemed to have thus far fulfilled the predictions of the soothsayer, is supposed to be pleading before the senate for leave to put himself to death, lest he "should" kill his father. He advances first—"fatuity of life, which is but a repetition of one day; and then the credit of dying in health and honour before one is "forced" to it. These are arguments (he says) in common with himself and others, but his own case is peculiar.—I fear lest before I die, I should kill my own father. I could kill myself without asking leave; but then I should die like a parricide, and be cast out unburied (as a note explains it) for having rendered no account of my intended voluntary death to the senate." This declamation then, though fictitious, proceeds wholly on the supposed well-known custom of asking leave of the senate.

Towards the end of the fourth century lived the sophist Libanius of Antioch; a man of eloquence, and who amid other writings exercised his rhetorical abilities in the composition of Greek declamations on various subjects. Among these he has many supposed pleadings before the senate for leave of self-destruction. The assigned causes indeed are often ludicrous, or calculated to display a vein of humorous eloquence: but still the foundation is laid in an acknowledged necessity of asking permission before the perpetration of suicide. In the sixth declamation of Libanius a man is introduced, as pleading before the senate for liberty to swallow the hemlock-draught—"that he may be freed from the garrulity of a Isquacious wife."—"Truly (says he) if our legislator had not been too much addicted to law-making, I should have been under no necessity of proving before you the expediency of my departure; but a rope and the first tree would have given me peace and quiet. But since he, deter-

mining

“ mining we should be slaves, has deprived us even of the liberty of dying when we please, and has enchained us with decrees on this business, I imprecate the author and obey his mandates, in thus laying my complaints and my request before you.” The whole oration is humorous and eloquent. In the “ eighth” the sophist introduces an “ envious” man begging the same permission; because his neighbour’s wealth has increased beyond his own. “ I stand before you (says he) protected by that most useful law, which pleads in my behalf in the following manner. Whoever thou art to whom life is a burden—die. Art thou immersed in evils? exhaust the hemlock. Art thou oppressed with calamities? away and die. Let the wretch recite his calamities; let the senate bestow the antidote, and let grief be dissolved in death.” He then displays the felicity of riches and the miseries of poverty. In the “ ninth” Libanius introduces Timon, the man-hater, begging leave to despatch himself, because he was brought into this curious dilemma—“ that though he was bound by profession to hate all mankind; yet he could not help loving Alcibiades.” In the “ tenth” a “ covetous” man puts in his claim to the deadly potion,—“ because the law obliged him to give up a certain portion of a treasure he had found.” His chief argument is, “ that a man’s misery must depend on his own feelings: one man will be ready to kill himself on the loss of a child, who will endure all bodily pain without a thought of this kind. Another cannot exist under the torture of disease, who will bear with patience the loss of his children. As for his own part, nothing affected him like the being obliged to give back again, what was once in his possession: he had rather part with his life than his money.” In the “ eleventh” a “ parasite” appears before the court on the same errand. His complaint is,—“ that his great lord and patron has lately taken to the study of philosophy; and consequently that in proportion as he increases in wisdom, he will find less time and less inclination to attend to fulsome adulation. But that he (the parasite) should soon feel the misery of this in the want of many a good meal; and that the thoughts of thus gradually starving is worse than drinking down a bowl of hemlock, which would put a speedy end to his woes.” In the “ twelfth,” an “ orator” demands to die “ for the good of his city, which might be supplied with provisions in a famine, if the citizens would would but deliver him up to the enemy; which they refusing to do, he insists on the hemlock to satisfy his enemies.” In the “ thirteenth,” Philip demands

Demosthenes,

Demosthenes, who during the five days granted for deliberation, “ demands the hemlock.” Whatever might be Libanius’s motive for writing so many declamatory orations on this subject; whether it were purely to display his own vein of humorous eloquence, or to ridicule the custom of application to the magistrate, by pourtraying such frivolous causes of suicide, yet all that is wished to be proved in this place seems established from what has been produced; viz. that the law of asking leave of the magistrate was known in various [F] places, and was an idea familiar to the mind during [G] many ages.

There was a woman of famous memory in the island of Cyprus named Demonassa, who is said to have framed a law against suicide. Her story is singular, if not abounding too much in the marvellous. However the reader shall have the account of it, as follows, and may give it what degree of [H] credit he pleases. “ Demonassa was well skilled in policy and legislation. She gave three remarkable laws to the Cyprians. The first—that every adultress should have her head shaved close and then be publicly prostituted. Her own daughter being caught in adultery, suffered this punishment. The second was, that whoever killed himself, should be cast out without burial. The third was, that he should be condemned to death, who should kill a ploughing ox. She had also two sons. The one killed an ox and was put to death accordingly; the other killed himself, and his body was cast out without burial. Demonassa supported herself under these accumulated misfortunes with wonderful fortitude for some time, still continuing to frame wise laws. But accidentally seeing a cow, that was grievously moaning for the loss of her calf, the fimi-

[F] The Phœceans from Ionia are supposed to have first settled in Massilia (Marseilles) about the year of Rome 164; and to have brought this law along with them—a law which probably prevailed in many Grecian islands and colonies in Asia. How far it might be observed is another matter.

[G] Petrus Heigius Juris Conf. celeberrimus in Quæstionibus Juris, Quæst. 36. n. 5. “ *Causam mortis (scil. voluntariæ) prius senatui Romano & Massiliensi approbare necesse erat, ut hæc morâ interjectâ medicinam fortè aliquam morbo maturè afferendi occasio non deesset.*”—Extract from Jo. Andreas Quenstedius, de Sepulturâ veterum, cap. iii. in Gronovii Thesaurus, fol. Vol. II. p. 1215.

[H] See Dion Chrysostom in his sixty-fourth oration, “ Of Fortune.” He was a Greek writer of Prusa in Bithynia, and much in favour for his wisdom with the Emperor Trajan. He says—“ We complain unreasonably of the trifling hardships of fortune;” and then he instances (among others) Demonassa, as a real grievous sufferer, who yet endured long with great fortitude.

“ larity of situation struck her so forcibly, as to drive her into an instantaneous fit of despair; so that she leaped headlong into a cauldron of melted copper. “ There was an ancient tower, in which was a brazen statue immersed in melted brass in memory of the fact; and on a pillar near was the following inscription—“ I was wise indeed, but not fortunate.”

A punishment was inflicted on suicide at Miletus, a city of Ionia, on a certain occasion, which has been transmitted to us in the writings [1] of Plutarch and Aulus Gellius. The story as related by Plutarch (on whom Aulus Gellius rests his own account) is as follows. “ The Milesian virgins were at one time possessed with an uncommon rage for suicide. All desire of life seemed suddenly to leave them, and they rushed on death (by the help of the halter) with an impetuous fury. The tears and entreaties of parents and friends (for they were unmarried women) were of no avail; and if they were prevented by force for a while, they evaded all the attention and vigilance of their observers, and found means to perpetrate the horrid deed. Some ascribed this extraordinary species of desperation and phrensy to certain occult and maddening qualities of the air at that season, some how or other peculiarly injurious to the “ female” frame and texture both of body and mind (since the men were not visibly affected by it); while the superstitious considered it, as a calamity sent from the Gods, and therefore beyond the power of human remedy.” But whatever was the cause (which seems wholly unknown), the effect was visible and important, and could not be suffered to rage long without manifest injury to the state. While speculative men therefore were attempting to assign the former, the active magistrate was endeavouring to destroy the latter; for which purpose the following decree was issued. “ That the body of every young woman, who hanged herself, should be dragged naked through the streets by the same rope, with which she had committed the deed.” This wise edict had in a short time the desired effect, and the Milesian virgins were no longer given to this inordinate species of suicide. “ The fear of shame and ignominy (adds Plutarch by way of reflection) is an argument of a good and virtuous mind; and they who regarded not pain and death, which are usually esteemed the

[1] See Plutarch's Treatise, “ Of the Virtues of Women;” and Auli Gellii Noctes Atticæ, L. XV. c. x.

“ most dreadful of evils [κ], could not however endure the thoughts of having “ their dead bodies exposed to indignity and shame.” This principle of rousing shame in the mind of an intended suicide, with respect to the disposal of the dead body, is an excellent one as far as it goes; and it may be supposed to have a peculiar degree of strength and efficacy over the female breast, as being impressed with nicer feelings of delicacy and sensibility. It might be powerful also on the minds of some men in ancient times, not so much through an excess of decency and modesty, as on account of the supposed sufferings that attended the disgraced and unhallowed carcase in the shades below. But it is to be feared that this influence alone will prove but weak on the modern unprincipled mind, which discounts all hopes and fears of futurity, and whose chief care for the body is to enjoy the good things of life without fear or shame of consequences; and when these enjoyments fail, to plunge into a supposed and to them desirable annihilation. But still every mark of disgrace and infamy should be practised on the body of every suicide, if it be only to express our horror and indignation at the enormity of the crime.

[κ] Sunt qui putant virgines hæc Milefias laborasse furore uterino. Hippocrates enim “ De Virginitibus” hoc morbo affectas nonnunquam ob oppressionem, quæ circa cor est, suffocationem sibi parare seseque strangulare scribit, vel etiam in puteos desilire ac præcipitare; existimantes hoc ut præstantissimum remedium omnemque utilitatem excedere; sic ut voluptas quædam mortis tanquam boni cuiusdam expetendæ eas incedat.—AULI GELLII Noctes Atticæ, L. XV. c. x. in notis ad locum.

The author of the “ Historical Essay on old Maids” (Hayley) humourously remarks on this little piece of history—“ that as only parents and friends (but neither husbands nor lovers) are named by “ Plutarch, as entreating and advising these Milesian women to spare their own lives; and neither “ men nor married women are mentioned as thus destroying themselves (which must have been the “ case, had the cause been an infectious air); therefore they must have been a set of “ antiquated “ virgins” only who were driven to final despair.”

C H A P VII.

Suicide from its frequency at Rome often called the Roman Death.—Doubtful whether any actual law existed concerning suicide in the earliest ages of Rome, except it was contained in the Pontifical Books under the insepulture annexed to a death by “ hanging.”—Tarquinius Priscus’s punishment of it on a particular occasion.—In the early ages of the Roman state suicide was seldom committed, but on grounds of private or public virtue.—Lucretia.—Curtius.—The Decii.—A reverence for religion and the Gods withheld the old Romans from self-murder.—Conduct of Regulus.—Causes of the growth of suicide in Rome.—Corruption of principles and manners.—Introduction of Grecian philosophy.—Attempts of Cineas (king Pyrrhus’s ambassadour) to corrupt the principles of the Romans by the introduction of Epicurean philosophy,—unsuccessful at that early period.—Indignation of Fabricius.—After the demolition of Carthage and the conquest of Greece and the Asiatic provinces, foreign luxury and foreign philosophy corrupted the simplicity and virtue of the Roman character.—About this period the philosophers and rhetoricians made their first appearance in Italy.—Decree passed to banish these from Rome.—Afterwards rhetorical and philosophical ambassadours were sent from Athens to Rome, whom the Roman youths heard with much attention.—Cato the censor’s dread of the influx of Grecian learning.—The doctrines of the new Academy introduced at this time into Rome by Carneades did wonderful mischief by unsettling all principles: while the tenets of Epicurus and Zeno (which were also now publicly taught in Rome) highly encouraged the practice of suicide on different grounds.—The Epicurean doctrines took with the dissipated, the Stoical with the incorrupt Roman;—and both approved the practice of suicide. The Epicurean philosophy or a contempt of religion and the Gods became familiar in Rome, and consequently produced a great number of suicides during the latter part of the Roman republic.—Lucretius diffuses the doctrines of the Epicureans by his famous poem “ De naturâ rerum.”—Stoicism another great source of Roman suicide.—Its tenets calculated to meet the ideas of those Romans, who preserved their dignity of character during the general depravity; and particularly its doctrine of suicide.—The cause of this traced.—As Epicurean and stoical maxims introduced

introduced the principle, so the circumstances of the times combined to draw it forth into continual practice.—The rage of suicide under the first Roman emperors.—The coolness and intrepidity of suicides at this time was wonderful; and the methods they used of destroying themselves required uncommon patience and perseverance.—Examples of both sexes.—Rise of the Roman laws against suicide, which were entirely of a fiscal nature; not to punish it as a crime in itself, but only when it was detrimental to the state.—Extracts from Justinian's Digests.—Summary of what has been advanced concerning Roman suicide.

THE practice of suicide was so frequent at Rome, that it has often been called the “Roman Death;” meaning thereby to connect it with that Roman fortitude, which disregarding life led its possessor to rush voluntarily on death in a variety of shapes. But it would be forming a very erroneous and unjust opinion of the ancient Romans to imagine, that they were equally favourers of suicide during all the periods of their empire; since the contrary will easily appear to have been the case, by tracing the rise and progress of this practice among them, together with the laws and customs respecting its commission. Whether any ancient laws of Rome expressly forbid its practice, is a point not clearly ascertained. There is a passage in Tully, where speaking of suicide he says; “When the Deity himself has given any one a just cause of putting an end to his life, the wise man joyfully accepts it; nor does he then break the bonds of his prison, “which the laws forbid,” but quits life as one, who has obtained permission from God [κ] as from the magistrate.” Now the laws to which Tully here refers were probably those contained in the Pontifical Books, which adjusted all matters relative to religious ceremonies, of which the rites of sepulture [L] made no inconsiderable part. But it appears from these, that hanging was an infamous kind of death, and that the bodies of those, who died in this manner, were to be cast out without burial. It is not then impossible, that suicide might be pointed at under the punishments annexed to this kind of death; since hanging was so very usual a method of self-destruction in ancient times,

[κ] Cum vero causam justam Deus ipse dederit, nã ille vir sapiens, lætus ex his tenebris in lucem illam excesserit; nec tamen illa vincula carceris ruperit—leges enim vetant; sed tanquam a magistratu aut ab aliquâ potestate legitimâ, sic a Deo evocatus atque emissus exierit.—Tusc. Disp. I. 30.

[L] Nec cœlestes modò cœremonias, sed justa quoque funebria placandosque manes, ut idem Pontifex edoceret.—Liv. I. 20.

and is continually alluded to as such by the writers of antiquity. The infamy then attendant on hanging and its consequent infepulture, might in part at least be designed for the punishment of suicide; and with that it has been connected by some [M] learned men. But whether any actual law existed in ancient Rome for the punishment of suicide or not (which is a doubtful matter), there seems to have been little necessity for its exertion during the best days of the republic. One remarkable instance indeed occurs of the contagion of suicide among the lower orders of the people, as far back as the reign of Tarquinius Priscus, which as it required, so it received, an effectual check by the spirited introduction of an extraordinary mode of punishment. After this king had employed the Roman people in successful wars abroad, he filled up their leisure at home in works of less apparent honour, though greater utility. These were to cut drains and common sewers of immense size and durability. When the soldiers disdained these servile offices and saw no end of their labours, many of them chose rather to lay violent hands on themselves than to proceed in their work. The contagion of this example spreading apace, the king ordered the bodies of these self-murderers to be nailed on crosses, and thus exposed as spectacles to the rest of the citizens, to be left a prey to the fowls of the air; which put an effectual stop to the practice. The influence of shame and horror on the living checked this sudden rage of self-murder. However this was only a temporary expedient adapted

[M] *Purpureos moritura manu discindit amictus,
Et nodum informis leti trabe necit ab altâ.*

VIRG. *Æn.* XII. of Amata's hanging herself.

Servius's note on this passage is as follows. Sane sciendum, quod cautum fuerat in Pontificalibus Libris, ut qui laqueo, vitam finisset infepultus abjiceretur. Unde bene ait, "Informis leti," quasi mortis infamissimæ. Cassius autem Emina ait Tarquinium Superbum (Priscum potius) cum cloacas populum facere coegisset & ob hanc injuriam multi se suspendio necarent, jussisse corpora eorum cruci affigi, tunc primum turpe habitum est mortem sibi consciscere: & Varro ait, Suspendiosis quibus iusta fieri jus non sit; suspensis oscillis velut per imitationem mortis parentari. Docet ergo Virgilius fecundum Varronem & Cassium, quia se laqueo induerat, leto perisse informi.—Grotius (*de Jure Belli & Pacis*, L. II. c. xix.) and Bishop Pearce (in his sermon on self-murder) quote and follow this opinion of Servius.

Sepultura prohiberi nisi magnorum scelerum damnatos (putâ parricidii, perduellionis, itemque suspendiosos) non moris apud priscos.—LIPSI Com. ad Tac. *An.* VI.

But "suspendiosi" often means those affixed to crosses by way of punishment, whose bodies were to be a prey to the fowls of the air.

to serve a particular purpose : “ it was a remedy (adds Pliny) never devised before “ nor practised [N] since.”

But this extraordinary case excepted, very few instances of suicide are on record in the first and pure ages of the Roman state. Application was rarely made to this action, except as an exertion of public spirit or an example of private virtue. When a Lucretia plunged a poniard into her own bosom, and though unconscious of guilt determined to suffer its punishment, she furnished a noble lesson to her sex of the native charms and influence of modesty ; so as well to deserve (on heathen principles) to have her name for ever annexed to the idea [o] of chastity. When a Curtius leaped into [p] the yawning gulph, it was to sacrifice his own life to the perpetual fame of his country ; and when the Decii at different [q] times devoted themselves with all religious solemnity to certain death, it was to purchase victory to the arms of their fellow-citizens. Here was a liberal and generous principle of suicide, in which self and its interests (future fame alone excepted) were in no shape concerned. Its occasions therefore were rare and its circumstances full of dignity. It breathed a spirit of virtue, of freedom, of disinterestedness and love of solid glory. It was an event founded on a certain dignity of sentiment, on a brave and magnanimous principle of conduct ; and not, as in the after-times of Rome, made a matter of private concern and selfish feelings, or a cowardly, criminal and desperate conclusion of a base and inglorious life. Thus stood the case of suicide in the earlier days of Rome ; in which religion [r] was cultivated with zeal, and the fear of the Gods was carried even to an excess of superstition. This enthusiastic

[N] Pulsant ruinæ sponte præcipientes aut impacta incendiis quatitur solum terræ motibus ; durant tamen Cloacæ a Tarquinio Prisco annis octingentis prope inexpugnabiles : non omittendo memorabili exemplo, vel eò magis, quoniam celeberrimis rerum conditoribus (i. e. historians) omissum est. Cum id opus Tarquinius Priscus, plebis manibus faceret, essetque labor incertum longior an periculosior, passim conscitâ nece Quiritibus tædium fugientibus. Novum & inexcogitatum antea posteaque remedium invenit ille rex ut omnium ita defunctorum figeret crucibus corpora, spectacula civibus simul & feris volucribusque laceranda.—PLIN. Nat. Hist. L. XXXVI. 15.

[o] Ego me, etsi peccato absolvo, supplicio non libero ; nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiæ exemplo vivat.—LIV. I. lviii.

[p] See Livy, VII. vi.

[q] See the form of these devotions, Liv. L. VIII. c. ix. and x. and L. X. xxviii.

[r] Nostri majores religiosisimi homines.—SALLUST.

reverence.

reverence for religion led the Romans to acknowledge a divine interposition in every event, and taught them to expect the favour and protection of Heaven, only so long as they continued to act with moderation, integrity and virtue: and what more particularly concerns the present inquiry, these awful impressions withheld them from the impatience and impiety of suicide. When the honour of their friends or their country called, they gloried in the voluntary sacrifice of their lives; but they feared to rush precipitately into the regions of the other world on mere personal regards. They were ready to suffer every torment and affliction themselves rather than yield to despair and suicide:—a Regulus [s] counselled his countrymen well against his own interest, revered his oath though exacted by enemies, and returned to a certainty of suffering [τ] cruel tortures in Carthage, from which his own sword (had he thought it lawful) might have instantly delivered him.

But the disinterested and enduring principles of a Regulus prevailed not always in Rome. It will be worth while to develop the causes, which led to a change of sentiments, and what could produce such a general tendency to the practice of suicide, as is to be found in the latter days of the Roman empire. Now this arose, not only from the great increase of power and wealth, and of

[s] It is not meant to be asserted here, that there were no self-murderers in the early days of Rome on private accounts (no doubt there were some), but only, that the general turn and temper of those times were not favourable to such suicide, as regarded self alone. Menenius Agrippa (we read) starved himself out of indignation at the ingratitude of the citizens; and Appius Claudius prevented a disgraceful condemnation by his previous self-murder; so did Appius the Decemvir and his colleague Oppius in the business of Virginia.

[τ] Fertur pudicæ conjugis osculum,
Parvosque natos, ut capitis minor,
A se removisse & virilem
Torvus humi possuisse vultum;
Donec labantes consilio Patres
Firmaret auctor nunquam aliâs dato,
Interque mœrentes amicos
Egregius properaret exul.
Atqui sciebat, quæ sibi barbarus
Tortor parabat: non aliter tamen
Dimovit obstantes propinquos,
Et populum reditus morantem, &c.—HOR. Od. V. L. III. of Regulus.

consequent

consequent luxury and corruption of manners, but from the introduction and progress of the Grecian philosophy in Italy at a time, when Roman valour and firmness were on the decline, as having no formidable rival to oppose them, and thus to keep up the spirit of their vigour and exertion.

For a considerable time after the adjustment of the disputes between the senate and people, sensations of public good and private disinterestedness seem to have wholly occupied the breast of a Roman citizen. Inasmuch that when Pyrrhus, King of Epirus came to assist the Tarentines against the Roman arms (about the year of Rome 474), he found the leaders of that incorrupt and sturdy race of men equally deaf to the insinuations of crafty eloquence, and hardened against the proffers of gold and bribery. A third method however was tried by the orator [v] Cineas (who was Pyrrhus's ambassador), that of endeavouring to corrupt their religious principles by using his mellifluous tongue in praise of the doctrines of Epicurus, which were then (it is said) for the first time broached in Italy. This discourse was held in the camp of Pyrrhus before Fabricius and a venerable deputation of Roman senators. The orator and philosopher explained what was maintained by that sect concerning the Gods and the commonwealth;—"that the Gods concerned not themselves at all about human affairs, but led a life of continued ages in mere indolence and pleasure; and that man ought to seek for his happiness in "pleasure" alone, without paying that attention to public affairs, which must unavoidably disturb his repose and tranquillity." But while Cineas was setting forth these enervating and degrading doctrines with all the eloquence that became a scholar of Demosthenes, the honest Fabricius is said to have [x] exclaimed—"O that the enemies of Rome may always entertain themselves with such opinions as these!" The harangue of Cineas was premature in its nature; since the

[v] Cineas was a scholar of the great Demosthenes, and Pyrrhus declared, "that he had conquered more towns by the persuasion of his tongue than by his own sword."—See Plutarch's Life of Pyrrhus.

[x] "Sæpe audiivi (says Cato the elder) a majoribus natu, qui se porro pueros a senibus, audisse dicebant, mirari solitum C. Fabricium, quod, cum apud regem Pyrrhum legatus esset, audisset a Thessalo Cineâ, esse quendam (Epicurum scil.) Athenis, qui se sapientem profiteretur, eumque dicere, omnia, quæ faceremus, ad voluptatem esse referenda; quod ex eo audientes M. Curius & J. Cornelianus optare solitos, ut id Samnitibus ipsique Pyrrho persuaderetur, quo facilius vinci possint, cum se voluptatibus dedissent."—Cic. de Senect.—See also Plutarch in his Life of Pyrrhus.

period was not yet arrived, in which such an indolent and impious philosophy could make an impression on Roman integrity, patriotism and religious faith. Active virtue, the love of his country, and the fear of the Gods predominated as yet in a Roman's breast. Even Gallic barbarity in the midst of conquest had not long before been awed into reverence by the majestic gravity and venerable appearance [v] of a Roman senate, so as to offer a blind adoration, as to the tutelar deities of the place. Such characters were not fit to become disciples of Epicurus. But time works wonderful changes, and what was rejected then with contempt and indignation became applauded and patronized in a later period.

When the Romans had nothing further to dread from their great rival Carthage, and had also made themselves masters of the states of Greece and many provinces in Asia, they in their turn became the slaves of the vanquished, by the importation of Eastern manners and Grecian philosophy. "Foreign luxuries (says Livy, XXXIX. vi.) were introduced into Rome by our Asiatic armies. They first brought into the city couches of brass, and a sort of tables and side-boards, which were then esteemed magnificent furniture. Then were singing girls and female musicians, players, and dancers first introduced at convivial entertainments, and the banquets themselves were prepared with more than usual cost and care. "A cook," who by our ancestors was ever held to be a slave of the lowest estimation and use, began then to be valued; and what was before considered as a mere office of drudgery, was by degrees exalted into an art and profession: and yet these were but the seeds of our future growth of luxury." These increasing habits of voluptuousness introduced a correspondent effeminacy of manners. The sources of Roman simplicity being gradually corrupted and the streams of integrity tainted; the vitiated mind was easily drawn aside from the pursuits of solid glory to those of pleasurable indolence and gaudy show. Thus selfish views and principles of action necessarily gained ground. The valour of the patriotic hero dwindled into the ambition of the aspiring citizen. Luxury and profusion engendered avarice, avarice begot rapacity, and rapacity is the parent of fraud, injustice and cruelty. But when things are gone thus far, the mind eagerly catches at every opinion that attempts to weaken the foundations of virtue, that speaks slightly of the existence or interference of the Gods, and argues against all

[v] When Brennus the Gaul entered Rome at the head of his victorious army.

notions

notions of futurity: because under the influence of such opinions alone it can maintain its progress in vice with any tolerable comfort.

The inhabitants of Rome were verging towards this point of indifference to every thing disinterested and virtuous, when the philosophers and rhetoricians made [z] their first appearance in Italy. They were received with so much eagerness and applause by the Roman youth, that the senate began to take cognizance of the matter, and fearing a decay of ancient discipline, through the soft and enervating quality of study, actually passed a decree for [A] the banishment of all masters of rhetoric from Rome. The contagion of learning (if it may be so called) thus subsided for a time. But soon after it gained fresh vigour on the arrival of certain [B] rhetorical ambassadors from Athens, to whom the Roman youth listened with such eager attention, that Cato the censor fearing (perhaps too justly), lest this spirit of philosophizing should cause the spirit of acting to evaporate, and to degenerate into that of mere speaking, advised a dismissal of these wordy delegates as soon as possible, that they might go and declaim [C] to the Grecian children at home, and leave the Roman youth to

[z] About the year of Rome 586 (about 20 years before the destruction of Carthage), a number of Achæans and others from the principal cities of Greece, who were known to be disaffected to the Roman power there, were transported from their own country and dispersed in different parts of Italy. Being many of them men of great abilities and learning (the historian Polybius was one) and thus drawn off from public action, they solaced themselves in their retirement by the pursuit of letters, and by instructing the Roman youth in the principles of Grecian eloquence and philosophy.—See for more on this matter, “*Essay on Roman Learning*” prefixed to Kennet’s *Roman Antiquities*, and the authors he quotes.

[A] See Suetonius, *Lib. De Claris Oratoribus*, or Kennet as above, for this decree, which was passed A. U. C. 592.

[B] These were sent to Rome (about A. U. C. 693) by the Athenians to plead their cause before the senate in relation to a mulct that had been imposed upon them. Among the number was Carneades, the founder of the New Academy—a man of shrewd eloquence and versatility of tongue.

[C] See Plutarch’s *Life of the elder Cato*; to which may be added the following passage from Pliny, *Nat. Hist. Lib. XXIX. c. i.* Quod intelligi potest ex M. Catone (the elder) cujus auctoritati triumphus & censura minimum conferunt; tanto plus * in ipso est. Quamobrem verba ejus ipsa ponemus. “*Dicam de istis Græcis suo loco, Marce fili, quid Athenis exquisitum habeam, & quod bonum sit eorum literas inspicere non perdiscere. Vincam nequissimum & indocile genus illorum; & hoc puta vatem dixisse, quandocunque ista gens suas literas dabit, omnia corrumpet.*”

* This is something similar to what was said by Livy of the younger Cato, cujus gloriæ nec profuit quisquam laudando, nec vinuperando quisquam nocuit.

be instructed in the rougher virtues of their ancestors; "for that Roman manliness would certainly be destroyed, when once it was thoroughly infected with Greek letters." The ambassadors were quickly despatched, but not till after they had left a sufficient stock of philosophical opinions behind them to effect all that Cato had foretold [D].

Now there happened to be two sects of Grecian philosophers, whose opinions seemed particularly calculated to catch the attention of the Romans at this period; and which were both eminently adapted to promote the principle of suicide; the one by consequences indisputably flowing from their acknowledged principles; the other by direct and open avowal of its practice. These were the Epicureans and the Stoics. As for the doubting tenets of the new Academy, they were wonderfully adapted at this time to unhinge every thing [E] serious and to prepare the mind for the reception of rank Epicurism. The pleasurable doctrines of the Epicurean philosophy were well calculated to meet the growing dissolution of Roman virtue; whilst its infidel and atheistical notions with respect to the Gods and futurity, could not but serve to impress an idea of the indifference and innocence of suicide, and thus widely to disseminate its practice. When according to the prediction of the elder Cato, the vigour of Roman manners had suffered a taint by the introduction of rhetorical harangues, and the art of speaking well had taken place of the severer glory of acting well, the rising generation of Roman youth was naturally more earnest to make a progress in these light and superficial ornaments than in the severer virtues of their ancestors. These were left to the admirers of Stoicism; while the soft alluring paths of pleasure suited better with the pursuit of indolence and inactivity.

[D] *Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit.*——Hor.

[E] It is related of Carneades, that during his stay at Rome on occasion of the Athenian embassy (for he was one of the delegates) he one day made a full and accurate harangue on the obligation of justice, to the great satisfaction and improvement of his audience:—that the next day he refuted every thing he had said before, and argued away the virtue he seemed to have so firmly established. This was to confirm the doubting principles of his new sect. It might show his own wit and invention,—but on what were the admiring crowd to rest their judgments?—in doubt and uncertainty, in scepticism and infidelity—in speculative atheism and practical Epicurism. Cato had good reason to wish to get rid of such a man as this. Such a specimen justly led him to be severe on Grecian letters.

Facts

Facts confirmed the hasty strides, which the Epicurean philosophy made in Rome. For a short time [F] after this period (viz. the destruction of Carthage) it is evident, that all reverence for the Gods, all respect for oaths, all genuine love of their country, all regard for whatever was virtuous and serious, was nearly annihilated in Rome. The seeds of dissipation and corruption were so generally spread, that a wild, unlettered African could exclaim with truth on the conviction of his own experience—"that all things were [G] venal at Rome." The conduct of the Romans from this period, the bloody proscriptions of Marius and Sylla (which gave rise to a number of suicides), the Catalinarian conspiracy, the civil wars of the Triumvirates, are so many undeniable proofs, that all reverence for religion and the Gods, or in other words, that the degrading doctrines and atheistical tenets of the followers of Epicurus were very generally prevalent. A Roman senator could now be heard with patience and applause, whilst he was pleading the cause of traitors and conspirators before a Roman senate! A Roman senator could dare openly to avow without fear of reprehension, "that death is the end of all our cares;—that beyond it there [H] is neither "room for hopes nor fears." How would a Cineas have triumphed and a Fabricius hung his head, had they been present in this assembly!

In the decline of the republic the chief men of Rome were for the most part Epicureans. But the tenets of this philosophy were wonderfully adapted to confirm in principle the gross doctrine of suicide, which, when perpetrated as

[F] Deos negligere, omnia venalia habere—humana omnia divinaque misceri—delubra, spoliare, sacra profanare omnia polluere.—SALLUST.

[G] Urbem venalem & maturè perituram, si emptorem invenerit.—Jugurtha in SALLUST.

[H] In luctu atque miseris mortem ærurnarum requiem, non cruciatum esse; eam cuncta mortalium dissolvere; "Ultra neque curæ neque gaudio locum esse."—See Cæsar's speech in Sallust in favour of Cataline's associates.—See also Cato's reply to Cæsar, in which he slightly touches on this passage—but with no marks of Fabrician indignation at its impiety.—"Bene & composite C. Cæsar paulo ante in hoc ordine de vitâ & morte disseruit, credo falsa existimans ea, quæ de inferis memorantur; diverso itinere malos a bonis loca tetra, in culta, fœda ac formidolosa habere." Cicero on the same occasion seems to accede to Cæsar's opinion, only thinks it better, that the vulgar at least should have some dread of futurity. "Itaque ut aliqua in vitâ formido improbis esset posita, apud inferos ejusmodi quædam illi antiqui supplicia impiis constituta esse voluerunt; quod videlicet intelligebant, his remotis, mortem non esse pertimescendam."—CIC. in Catalinam, Orat. IV. sect. 4.

See more on these passages in Warburton's Divine Legation, Book III. sect. 2.

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the conclusion of a vicious course of life, must be founded on a disbelief of any future account. When our views of action are wholly selfish and grounded on mean and degrading principles (like those of Epicurus's herd); when the practice of forbearance is set at nought; when the Gods are discarded from all interference in worldly concerns and the retribution of futurity is annihilated; where such opinions prevail, if there arise a failure in any scheme of ambition, of pride, of avarice, of pleasure, then are the pangs of disappointment most severely felt, because there is no resting-place or grounds of submission and resignation left in the mind. The tortures of the passions are keen and excessive, and when their disappointments are deemed insurmountable, the only refuge is held forth in a flight by suicide. Thus not only an idea of its lawfulness, but of its expediency, its utility, and necessity, as a total relief from pain and trouble of all sorts, is unavoidably impressed on the mind. Such a prevalence had these absurd and monstrous doctrines in the decline of the Roman republic.

There wanted but one thing to diffuse and complete the baneful effect of opinions so pleasant in themselves to a vitiated mind; and that was, the persuasive powers and energy of language. This fascination was exhibited to the Romans in their native tongue by the poet Lucretius, who made the Grecian philosopher to assume a Latin garb, and who disguised and decorated his destructive doctrines in all the bold and figurative [1] fiction of strong nervous poetry. The genius of Lucretius was powerful, exuberant, and worthy of adorning a better subject than the exaltation [κ] of pleasure and atheism. But his

[1] Lucretius died (as some say killed himself) in the flower of his age; about the year of Rome 700, or 52 before Christ. A potion (as is generally said) had been given him some time before by his wife in a fit of jealousy, which at times disordered his brain; and it was during the lucid intervals of his phrenzy, that (as some affirm) he wrote his famous poem, "De Naturâ Rerum," on Epicurean principles.

[κ] Lucretius continually mentions the

— dux vitæ dia voluptas
Te sequitur cupidè, quò quemque inducere pergis.

And he honestly acknowledges (which is more candid than the modern race of infidels) that he hopes to establish his credit,

Primum quod magnis doceo de rebus & artibus
Religionum animos nodis exolvere pergo. — Lib. I. 930.

his poem was admirably calculated at the time to spread the cause of dissipation and impiety, with which that of self-murder is at all times closely connected. No wonder then, that the Romans were still further deluded by the plausibility of this writer, who concealed his "empty" schemes [L] under the beauties of poetic fiction. They gave themselves up from henceforward to an excess of pleasure, profusion, and luxury; and when all further procurement of these failed,—to the general and unrestrained practice of suicide.

But the effects of Epicurean principles being the same in every age and country, they are to be considered only as exercising their general influence on the Romans in the same manner, as they do in every state tending to corruption. There was however another peculiar source from whence much Roman suicide sprang; and which has contributed in a manner to aggrandise its fame in modern days;—and this was "Stoicism." The tenets of this philosophy were admirably adapted to coincide with the ideas of an old Roman; since the stoical wise man was in many points a transcript of his character. Severity of manners, disinterestedness, and firmness were expressive of both: but the principle from whence this integrity and resolution proceeded was in favour of the Roman. The Stoic was wrapped up in personal dignity, which he sought indeed through the practice of every thing that was useful to others, as well as honourable to himself; while the old Roman never seemed to study or think of his own dignity in comparison of his country's glory. The Stoic therefore retired from life, when he could no longer maintain his former consequence in the state; the old Roman, regardless of every thing that appertained to self, never considered his obligations to his country discharged, till he either fell in battle, or endeavoured to gain some great advantage to his fellow-citizens by throwing himself in the way of certain destruction.—But the transition was easy from the old Roman disinterestedness to the self-dignity of Stoicism. For when that country began to be debased by the profligacy of its own citizens, whose honour an old Roman preferred to his own, all concern for its interests was very na-

His arguments, "that all our uneasiness in life arises from the fear of death and from religion;" and his proofs "of the soul's dying with the body" are very artfully drawn up, though wholly destitute of substantial reasoning. But yet they are the arguments of all the sceptical and infidel writers of this age, who can produce no better, but who would fain pass them off for their own.

[L] ——— Namque est in rebus "Inane"—is Lucretius's maxim.

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turally and properly transferred by the few remaining virtuous members of the community to "themselves;" in whom alone in fact the republic could be said to exist: and thus "Stoical and Roman virtue" became coincident and united in a personal dignity of character. But as neither an old Roman citizen, nor a stoic philosopher, wished his country to exist but in freedom and honour, so neither in flagitious times did he choose himself to survive his own personal consequence. Wherefore though Roman integrity and virtue was setting apace on the introduction of the stoic philosophy, yet there were still many individuals, who entertained high notions of probity and a disinterested love of their country. Among such the doctrines of Stoicism found strenuous advocates; and in particular its avowal and injunction of suicide on dignified occasions was well calculated to inspire virtuous exertions in virtuous minds, in the midst of profligacy and corruption of manners. The Roman Stoic proceeded with vigour in his honest cause, being satisfied by his principles of philosophy, that it was both meritorious and honourable to put himself to death, when from the prevalence of outward circumstances against him, he could no longer maintain his life in its former [M] consequence. Suicide therefore gained daily ground on stoical principles amid the better sort of Romans; amid those, who adhered to ancient discipline and religious manners, till it obtained its full sanction and authority from the sword of Cato.

The joint influence then of the tenets [N] of these two sects of philosophy, which comprehended the citizens of most descriptions, proved a powerful and effectual cause of the introduction of the "principle" of suicide at Rome; whilst many particular circumstances of the times, which were full of public injustice, rapine, and cruelty, contributed to draw forth this [O] principle into frequent

[M] *Dignitas potius sine vitâ quàm vita sine dignitate*—was the stoical maxim.

[N] It appears however, that there were still adherers in Rome to the Socratic school, who condemned the principle of suicide; since Seneca says (as has been noticed before) "You will find even among those, who profess wisdom, some, who deny that we ought to offer violence to our own lives," &c.—Ep. lxx.

[O] The judicious Montesquieu (in his *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, c. xii.) mentions the following circumstances as productive of so much suicide in Rome. They are most of them consequences either of Stoical or Epicurean principles called forth into practice by the temper of the times. "One may give several reasons (says he) why the custom of suicide was so general among the

"Romans:—

frequent practice. It was during the reigns of the first Roman emperors that the rage of suicide was so generally prevalent, and was so much countenanced and applauded at Rome; when it was practised, not on causes of dignity alone, but on every light and trivial occasion. The annals of those days teem with suicide. Pity, horror and indignation are repeatedly raised in the breast of every one, who reads the self-murdering list. The perseverance of numbers, who starved themselves to death, was wonderful; the calmness and composure, nay even the cheerfulness they exhibited and the delight they seemed to take in opening and closing their veins, and in courting or retarding the approach of death, was truly astonishing; while the ceremony and solemnity, which others employed in accomplishing this fatal business, was as singularly striking and awful. It was not an act of privacy or retirement from the eye of observation, but openly avowed and often publicly performed; nor did single instances suffice, but it was done by whole families at once. It was not always even a voluntary act in the doer, but he was urged and inspirited to compass his own death. Examples might be brought without end, but a few will suffice (added to those, which have been already mentioned in different parts of the work) to give a trait of the rest. Among these instances we shall find, that the spirit of suicide also pervaded the female breast, and that numbers of women voluntarily sacrificed their lives with the greatest intrepidity: nor was their suicide always perpetrated on their own accounts, but many times for the purpose of infusing courage and resolution into a wavering husband, who was taught by these bloody heroines, how to strike the deadly blow.

If there can be excuse or semblance of fortitude in delivering oneself by suicide from acute pains and tortures of body, what must be thought of the spirit of that female [P], who judging the disorders under which her husband laboured to be incurable, and unwilling that he should live longer in torment, not only

“Romans:—the progress of the Stoic sect, which encouraged it:—the establishment of triumphs and of slavery, which led many great men to think, that they could not survive a defeat:—the advantage that the accused man had by killing himself rather than undergo a judgment, by which his memory was tarnished and his goods confiscated:—a kind of point of honour that might be more reasonable than that, which leads us at this day to cut the throat of a friend for a gesture or a word:—lastly its great encouragement to heroism, every one being thus able to finish the piece, which he played in the world, at what point he pleased.”

[P] See Plin. Ep. Lib. VI. xxiv.

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advised

advised him to put an end to his wretched being, but promised herself to become the example, the leader, and companion of his death! This she accomplished by tying her husband's body to her own, and then plunging into the lake, which was beneath their chamber-window. She was a private woman and unknown to fame. But as Pliny observes on this occasion, "the person" only and not the action was inferior to that of the distinguished Arria." This Roman matron, wishing to inspire her timid husband not to fall by the hands of a public executioner (to whose stroke he was condemned), plunged a dagger first into her own breast [Q.] and with a smile exclaimed, "My Pætus" "it hurts not." Resolution seems to have distinguished the women belonging to this family. For another Arria, who was daughter of the former and wife of Thrasea Pætus, was hardly withheld from accompanying her husband [R] in his last moments of suicide.—When a sword was denied to Portia for the purpose of self-destruction, she devoured hot burning coals, that she might show herself in her death to be the daughter of Cato and the wife [S] of Brutus.

An assembly of friends (not a consultation of physicians to preserve life) are found in debate in the sick-chamber of Marcellinus, urging the reasons, which should induce him to deliver himself from his bodily pains by becoming his own executioner. He was won by their arguments and starved himself after using much previous [T] ceremony.—The elegant and accomplished

[Q] "Pæte non dolet." See Plin. L. III. Ep. xvi. for more instances of heroism in this Arria the wife of Cæcina Pætus.

[R] Cæcina Pætus, who was engaged in a conspiracy in the reign of Claudius, killed himself with the same sword that reeked with his Arria's blood, but wanted this example of resolution in her to inspire him with sufficient courage. Thrasea Pætus, who was condemned by Nero, was a man of excellent character and unshaken integrity; consequently odious to court-minions. He also possessed a great share of stoical dignity and resolution. When his doom was fixed, his wife, who was the younger Arria, was very earnest to follow her mother's example and to die with Thrasea: but he would not suffer it for the sake of their infant-daughter. He then took Helvidius his son-in-law and the philosopher Demetrius into his chamber, where having cut the veins of both his arms, he sprinkled some of the blood on the floor, as a libation to Jupiter Liberator. Turning to Helvidius, "Young man (says he) behold this spectacle—and may the Gods avert the omen from you! but you are born in those days, in which it is necessary to strengthen your resolution by such examples of firmness."—TAC. AN. XVI. at end.

[S] VAL. MAX. L. III. ii. and L. IV. vi.

[T] See Seneca in Ep. lxxvii. and also Part IV. Chap. iii. of this work, where the story of Marcellinus's death is told at length in a note.

Atticus

Atticus exhibits an instance of the ease and notoriety, with which a Roman could determine to accelerate his own death. Being arrived at the age of seventy-seven years and labouring under a painful disorder, he called his friends into his chamber, and communicated to them his determination to starve himself to death. "You are witnesses (says he) how earnestly I have striven against my disorder. In this, I trust, I have given you satisfaction, though it has been to no purpose: I must now consult for myself. I would not wish to conceal from you, that from henceforward I shall cease to nourish my disorder by taking any sustenance; since whatever I now receive only serves to increase my pains by protracting my life. I should in the first place wish you to approve my design, or in the next not to attempt advising me against it." His friends were shocked and warmly remonstrated; but Atticus continued inexorable, and the fifth day's abstinence put a period to his life [v].

Starving was a very usual mode of suicide among the Romans, and especially in cases of obdurate distemper. One should imagine the tediousness of this process would have drawn aside many from the completion of their purpose; as it seems to require an uncommon exertion of resolution to be voluntarily dying for so many days together: and yet perseverance was seldom wanting. One should have thought at least that the quickest method would have been most desirable; and that application would have been as frequently made to the sword with them, as to the pistol with us. But this was not the case: since however strange and unaccountable it may appear in these days, there was often an indulgence in the protraction of a voluntary death, of which a sudden one would have deprived its careless perpetrator. Of this there is a remarkable instance in the self-murder of Petronius. The levity that distinguished his voluntary death was of a piece with the gaiety and frivolity of his life. The capricious friendship of a Nero had been withdrawn from Petronius, and in [x] conse-

[v] See the Life of Atticus in Cornelius Nepos.

[x] These suicides, who killed themselves for fear of being put to death (of whom there were numbers at this period), are lashed by Martial in the following epigram.

Hossem cum fugeret se Fannius ipse peremit;
Hic, rogo, non furor est, ne mori, mori?

quence he had determined on his own death. This *Arbiter elegantiarum* [v] during life seemed determined to indulge in a luxurious refinement of that death he was preparing to encounter. Being well aware, that he could not long escape from the murderous edict after a fall from the summit of imperial favour, he opened and closed his veins at pleasure; he slept during the intervals, or sauntered about, and enjoyed the delights of conversation with his friends. But his subjects were not of that apt and important nature, which distinguished the dying lips of a Seneca or a Socrates; since as Tacitus observes, “there was “no talk of the soul’s immortality, or the doctrines of wise men, but of light “poems and wanton [z] couplets.” The poet Lucan was another instance of this sort of indulgent serenity in the gradual approaches of his death. After the veins of his arms had been voluntarily opened and he had lost a quantity of blood, he felt his hands and his legs as it were already dead; while the vital parts were still warm and vigorous. This made him call to mind and repeat several lines out of his own *Pharsalia* descriptive of a person in a similar situation; and during the repetition his voice failed [A] him.

Cocceius

[v] Illi dies per somnum, nox officiis & oblectamentis vitæ transigebatur; utque alios industria, ita hunc ignavia ad famam protulerat, habebaturque non ganeo & profligator, ut plerique, sua haurientium, sed erudito luxu.—TAC. AN. XVI.

[z] Neque tamen præceps vitam expulit, sed incisas venas, ut libitum obligatas, aperire rursùm & alloqui amicos, non per seria aut quibus constantiæ gloriam peteret. Audiebatque referentes, nihil de immortalitate animæ & sapientium placitis, sed levia carmina & faciles versus. Servorum alios largitione, quosdam verberibus affecit; iniit & vias, somno indulsit, ut quamquam coacta mors, fortitæ similis esset.—TAC. AN. XVI.

“Monsieur de St. Evremond is very particular in setting forth the constancy and courage of Petronius *Arbiter* during his last moments, and he thinks he discovers in them a greater firmness of mind and resolution than in the death of Seneca, Cato, and Socrates. There is no question but this polite author’s affectation of appearing singular in his remarks, and making discoveries which had escaped the observations of others, threw him into this course of reflection. It was Petronius’s merit, that he died in the same gaiety of temper in which he lived; but as his life was altogether loose and dissolute, the indifference, which he showed at the close of it, is to be looked upon as a piece of natural carelessness and levity rather than fortitude. The resolution of Socrates proceeded from very different motives—the consciousness of a well-spent life and the prospect of an happy eternity.”—Spectator, N° 349.

[A] Is profluente sanguine, ubi frigescere pedes manusque, & paulatim ab extremis cedere spiritum, fervido adhuc & compote mentis pectore intelligit: recordatus carmen a se compositum, quo vulneratum militem per ejusmodi mortis imaginem obuisse tradiderat, versus ipsos retulit, eaque illi suprema vox fuit.—TAC. AN. XV.

N. B. The

Cocceius Nerva flourished in court-favour, was a man of skill and knowledge in the laws of his country, was prosperous in his affairs, sound in his health—and yet meditated suicide. His prince Tiberius, on being made acquainted with his intention, urged many powerful arguments to divert him from his purpose. He inquired into his reasons, he soothed and entreated him, and at length professed, how injurious it would be to his own (the Emperor's) character and reputation, should his bosom-friend thus put an end to his life without assigning a reason. But Nerva was resolute and died by voluntary abstinence. His friends afterwards intimated a cause which probably swayed with Nerva, but which he wished to conceal from the Emperor himself, viz. “that he was displeased with the state of public affairs and anxious for consequences; that he saw these were daily growing worse and worse, which determined him to die, whilst his own integrity was yet untainted.” (TAC. AN. VI.)

The circumstances accompanying the voluntary deaths of Lucius Vetus, his mother-in-law Sextia, and Pollutia his daughter, were truly affecting. Vetus being of the number of those, who in the reign of Nero were used to fall wretched victims to the villainy of “Informers,” prevented the stroke of the executioner on the entreaties of the women, who determined to bear him company in this bloody catastrophe. “He first distributed all the wealth in his possession amongst his domestics, ordering them at the same time to remove out of the house every thing they were able for their own use; leaving only three couches to support their three dead bodies. They then all three retired into the same chamber, and opening their veins with the same lancet, calmly waited a delivery from life. The eyes of the grandmother and father were both fixed on the daughter; while the daughter’s wandered from [B] one to the other.

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N. B. The lines were these.

— nec, sicut vulnere, sanguis

Emicuit lentus: ruptis cadit undique venis.

— pars ultima trunci

Tradidit in letum vacuos vitalibus artus.

At tumidus quæ pulmo jacet, quia viscera fervent.

Hæserunt ibi fata diu luctataque multum

Hæc cum parte viri, vix omnia membra tulerunt.—LUCAN, L. III. 638.

[B] The beautiful conciseness of the original is inimitable in a translation. Pater filiam; avia nepem; illa utroque intuens; & certatim precantes labenti animæ celerem exitum, ut relinquerent suos

It was the earnest prayer of each of them to die first and to leave the others in the very act of expiring. But nature preserved her course, and they expired in the order of their births."

Such spectacles as the above, horrid and barbarous as they may appear in these days, were frequently to be seen in the reigns [c] of the Cæsars. Great numbers of the noble families at Rome, who were perpetually liable to vexatious and dangerous prosecutions from court-minions, availed themselves of their contempt of death to avoid the shame of a public condemnation. They were also inclined to this act of suicide, as some advantages seemed annexed to this method of despatching themselves not experienced by those, who firmly stood their trial, which was sure to be followed by condemnation and execution. For these informations being always laid for some supposed treasonable practices against the state or person of the Emperor, the goods of the offender were of course confiscated on his condemnation, and his body (as that [p] of a traitor) refused the common rites of burial. Whereas the bodies of those, who proceeded in this summary way on themselves, were buried as usual, and their last wills remained in full force. This is called by Tacitus "*Pretium festinandi*," or the

suos superflites & morituros. Servavit ordinem fortuna; & senior prius, tum cui prima ætas, extinguuntur. —TAC. AN. XVI. from whence the account is taken.

[c] Tacitus, (AN. XVI.) in the midst of a long catalogue of cruelties, murders, and suicides during the reign of Nero, makes the following reflections. Etiam si bella externa & obitas pro republica mortes tantâ casuum similitudine memorarem, meque ipsum satias cepisset, aliorumque tædium expectarem, quamvis honestos civium exitus, tristes tamen & continuos aspernantium. At nunc patientia servilis, tantumque sanguinis domi perditum, fatigant animum & mœstitiâ restringunt. Neque aliam defensionem ab iis, quibus ista nocentur, exegerim, quàm ne oderint " (vel ut alii legunt, omiserim)" tam segniter pereuntes. Ira illa numinum in res Romanas fuit, quam non ut in cladibus exercituum aut captivitate urbium semel editam transire licet. Detur hoc illustrium virorum posteritati, ut quomodo exequiis a promiscuâ sepulturâ separantur, ita in traditione supremorum accipiant habebantque propriam memoriam.

[p] Tria potissimum sunt genera, quibus leges Romanæ sepulturam denegant. Hi sunt Hostes patriæ " (of any sort)," Suspendiosi (hoc est, cruciarii, vel in patibulo suspensi, vel cruci affixi) & *Autexupes*. "Non solent (inquit Neratius Jurisconsultus) lugeri hostes, vel perduellionis damnati, nec suspendiosi, nec qui manus sibi intulerunt, non tædio vitæ, sed malâ conscientiâ." —KIRCHMAN'S Appendix ad Libros de Funeribus Romanorum.

reward

reward [E] of accelerating their own deaths. But it does not mean (as it has been frequently misinterpreted) that it was a proposed, specific reward for suicide; but only, that as suicide does not seem to have been punishable in general at this time in Rome, and as the person in this case committing it, had not been "condemned" for any crime, he enjoyed the common privileges of the rest of his fellow-citizens, the right of burial and of disposing [F] of his effects. However

[E] Promptas ejusmodi mortes (viz. by suicide) metus sacrificii faciebat; & quia damnati publicatis bonis sepulturâ prohibebantur: eorum qui de se statuebant, humabantur corpora, manebant testamenta—pretium festinandi.—TAC. AN. VI.

Lipsius's note on this passage is as follows. Non mirum, quia ne damnati quidem nec peracti rei. Dio hæc omnia exprimere voluit in Actis anni 784. *Εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν τὰ σῶμα τὰ ἀπάντων ἐρρίπτετο, καὶ μὴτὰ τούτο ἐς τοὺς ποταμοὺς ἐμβάλλετο. Ἡδὲ δὲ καὶ ὅπως οἱ παῖδες τῶν ὧσιν αὐτοὶ μὴ κληρονομοῖσι.* Bona ergo manebant, si quis prævenisset damnationem, & testamenta. Sed quid in præmiis accusatorum? Nihil fecius. Dari solere ostendit Taciti locus supra dictus Lib. IV. "Et quia Cornutus (who had been accused) suâ manu ceciderat, actum de præmiis accusatorum abolendis, si quis majestatis postulat" ante perfectum judicium se ipse vitâ privavisset; ibaturque in eam sententiam, ni durius contraque morem suum palam pro accusatoribus Cæsar (Tiberius) "irritas leges, rempublicam in præcipiti conquestus esset: subverterent potius jura quàm custodes eorum amoverent." Sic delatores, genus hominum publico exitio repertum & pœnis quidem nunquam satis coercitum, per præmia eliciebantur." Dari non solere, Seneca in narrandâ Cremutii Cordi morte, quæ sub hoc Tiberii tempus (and somewhat after Cornutus's suicide). "Cognito consilio ejus (inquit) publica voluptas erat, quod e faucibus avidissimorum luporum eriperetur præda. Accusatores adeunt consulum tribunalia, queruntur Cordum mori, ut interpellaret quod coegerant. Adeo illis Cordus videbatur effugere. Magna res erat in quæstione, an morte rei prohiberentur?"—Nec satis scio, quomodo in concordiam reducam eos locos. Sub Claudio & Nerone forte aliquid fuerit, & Senecam deceperit mos sui ævi?

There seems a difficulty also in reconciling Tacitus to himself, when he says respecting Cornutus's death, "Delatores per præmia eliciebantur"—because the informers were not to be deprived of their rewards, though the accused person should kill himself:—and here—Eorum qui de se statuebant, manebant testamenta—that is, that the accused saved his effects, by destroying himself in time. There was certainly no law existing at that time in Rome, by which a person accused only of treason, but not condemned, could be punished for the same: and as for his killing himself, it at that time led to no punishment; consequently humabatur corpus, manebat testamentum. But in all tyrannical governments "informers" are a useful set of men to the tyrant, and must be encouraged by some means or other. While the matter of suicide remained in its old state, the delatores no doubt met with rewards in some shape or other, though the accused person slipped through their hands by a voluntary death; till at length it was settled, who might, and who might not, despatch themselves with impunity.

[F] See the account of Licinius Macer, who being accused of bribery and likely to be condemned, called out to his judge (who was Cicero then Prætor) to observe, that he died "uncondemned," though accused; and that therefore his goods could not be exposed to public auction (hæcæ subjici), and he immediately

ever as by this means voracious plunderers were often deprived of their prey, and the state sometimes suffered by the escape of real criminals; and as the practice of suicide now abounded in Rome, it became necessary to check its further progress. This was done therefore not through any principle of discountenancing the act as sinful in itself; but merely as it was often found in its effects to be injurious to the state and particularly to the public treasury.

The Roman laws [c] against suicide, of which many were enacted by the Emperors, were of a fiscal nature, and only considered, how far the act of self-murder in any individual affected the state or treasury, according to which determination it was passed over or punished. In some parts of the Roman

immediately choked or strangled himself with an handkerchief. The son was accordingly suffered to enjoy the family inheritance.—VAL. MAX. L. IX. xii.

See another account in Val. Max. L. IX. xii. of one Coma, who died merely by holding in his breath in sight of the whole court, when he was on his trial: on which Val. Max. breaks out as follows. Caput operuit, innixusque genibus compresso spiritu, inter ipsas custodum manus, inque conspectu summi imperii exoptatâ securitate quievit. Torqueant se miserj, quibus extingui quàm superesse utilis est, trepido & anxio consilio, quàm ratione vitâ exeant quærentes: ferrum acuant, venena temperent, laqueos apprehendant, vastas altitudines circumspeciant, tanquam magno apparatu, aut exquisitâ molitione opus sit, ut corporis atque animi infirmo vinculo coherens societas dirimatur. Nihil horum Coma, sed intra pectus inclausa anima finem sui reperit. Enimverò minimo studio retinendum bonum, cujus cadaeva possessio tam levi afflatu violentiæ concussa dilabi potuit.

[c] Ausim præstare, totum, quâ patet, Jus civile Romanorum, nihil aliud coercere, quàm injuriam, aliorum corpori, bonis, & existimationi, illatam, nec cuiquam invidiæ, nedum pœnæ fuisse, se & sua, modò alterius injuria abût, profligare, perdere. Neque adeo dubitari videbatur posse, quin eo jure licita quoque fuerit naturalis libertas se ipsum occidendi, hæc unâ cautione, “si citra alterius injuriam fiat.”——Tantum de Jure civili (loquor); ut sciamus Romanis legibus, si vivere displiceret, mori licuisse. Dignum quoque argumentum, quod ex Jure divino enarretur; sed placet eo abstinere, etiam idcirco, quia, ut inquebat Cujacius, de rebus Theologicis rogatus sententiam, “Nil hoc ad Edictum Prætoris.” Exemplâ *avtoxypias*, apud Græcos præsertim & Romanos, non adfero; ut nec mores Gentium, nec auctoritates veteres, novas, in utramque partem; sic enim librum scriberem de re, quam unâ observatione constitui transmittere. De ratione quoque non disputo; probanda sit an damnanda *avtoxypia*? nam ejus rei varia est inspectio. Tullii sententia Catonem defendit, quod cum dedecore & pudore reipublicæ superesse noluerit: Bruti notat, quod, cui prodesse poterat, rempublicam deferuerit. Sane ut sui ipsius cædes, quæ fit consultâ ratione, animi magnitudini deputatur, sic non minor pellucet animi virtus in ferendis constanter quibusque adversis; ut dubitare possis, major sit Stoicus, qui ad ea fugienda constituit abire, unde negârit redire quenquam, an verò qui pectore bene præparato quamlibet sortem irridet, & in adversis obdurato animo peritat?——Corn. van Bynkerhoek Observat. Juris Rom. L. IV. c. iv. Περὶ *Αυτοκτενίας*. Tom. I. p. 345 and 351. Ed. 1749. 4to.

empire also (as has been seen before) it was necessary to ask leave of the magistrate, and to assign the causes, which induced [H] to perpetrate suicide. If these were approved (and the chief debate was, how the state would be affected thereby) it might be committed with impunity, with reputation and honour; but if the petition was rejected, disgrace and forfeiture and ignominious sepulture were the consequences of its commission. The laws, which are to be found

[H] See Cean and Massilian customs in Part IV. C. vi. and also Orations of Quintilian and Libanius. Seneca likewise in his *Controversies*, L. VIII. iv. has one "De Homicidâ sui." He says, *Lex ait, "Homicida sui infepultus abjiciatur."* He then declaims on both sides of the question with oratorical flourishes: the only argument he uses is on the side of Infepulture—"that those men, who fear not death itself, should have something to dread after death; otherwise he is able to attempt every thing that is bad, who can kill himself with impunity."—An usual disgraceful mode of burial in capital cases seems to have been by throwing the body into the Tiber.

The following inscription is to be found in Spon's *Miscellanea eruditæ Antiquitatis*, Sect. septima. Its date is uncertain; but it provides a place of burial for several descriptions of people of infamous character, who were not permitted to have one of their own—among whom we find the suicide.

Donatio sepulture Militibus Exauthoratis, aliisque quorum memoria infamis. Sassinæ (now Sarfina a city in the Ecclesiastical State).

BAEBIVS GEMELLVS

SASSINAS MVNICIPIBVS SINGVLEIS
INCOLEISQVE LOCA SEPVLTVRÆ D. S. P.
DAT EXTRA AVTORATEIS ET QVEI
SIBEI LAQVEO MANVS ADTVLISSENT
ET QVEI QVAESTVM SPVRVM PROFE
SSI ESSENT SINGVLEIS IN FRONTE
P. X IN AG. P. X INTER PONTEM
SAPIS ET TITVLVM SVPERIOREM QVEI
EST IN FINE FVNDI FAGONIANI
IN QVEIBVS LOCIS NEMO HVMA
TVS ERIT QVI VOLET SIBI VIVOS
MONVMENTVM FACIET IN QVEIB.
LOCEIS HVMATI ERVNT EI D. T.
QVI HVMATVS ERIT POSTERISQ.
EIVS MONVMENTVM FIERI LICEBIT.

(Flaviolus Sapis.)

(D. T. id est Dumtaxat.)

Ex MS. Franc. Redi Sereniff. Ducis Florent. Medici.

Citatur hæc ipsa inscriptio in *Historia Sassinensi*, sed fracta & dimidiâ linearum parte decurtata, quæ tamen integra perlegi merebatur, cum antiquissima sit, ut conicere licet ex antiquo scribendi modo EI pro I. Is autem Bæbius Gemellus pietatem suam testari voluit in eos, qui alias sepulchro carebant, "Extraauthoratis" nempe, sive Exauthoratis, id est, qui officio aliquo præcipuè militiæ ob aliquod crimen privati fuerant: "Item iis, qui sibi laqueo manus attulissent, & iis qui spurcum quæstum professi essent;" hoc est, lenonibus & meretricibus, quibus locus solum concedebatur, in quo monumentum sibi facere vivi poterant.—Spon Misc.

in Justinian's Digests relative to suicide furnish us with a very clear proof, that the Romans did not punish suicide as sinful in itself, but as an offence against the state alone. The tenour of them is as follows. "Those, who being actually accused, or who being caught [1] in any crime and dreading a prosecution, made away with themselves, were to have their effects confiscated. But this confiscation was no punishment of suicide as a crime in itself, being then only to take place, when the crime committed incurred confiscation of property, and when the person accused of it would have been found guilty. For which reason the heirs at law were permitted (if they thought proper) to try the cause, as though the accused person, who had put a period to his life, had been still living: and if his innocence could be proved, they were still entitled to his effects. But if any one killed himself, either through weariness of life or an impatience under pain and ill health; from a load of private debt, or from any other reason not affecting the state or the public treasury, the property of the deceased flowed in its natural channel. In the case of an attempted, but incomplete suicide, where a man was under no accusation, a distinction was made as to the causes impelling to it, before the question of its punishment was to be determined. If it proceeded not from a weariness of life or an impatience under the pressure of some calamity, the attempter was to suffer the same punishment, as if he had effected his purpose; and for this reason (says the rescript), "because he, who without reason spared not his own life, would not "be likely to spare another man's." If one [κ] in prison made away with himself, the person who guarded him was to suffer the punishment due to the suicide.—Suicide in the soldiery was more heavily restricted; but still on the same public principle; as the life of a soldier was deemed of value to the state, and consequently never at his own free disposal; but the action itself was still considered as indifferent, if not as in many cases honourable. The soldier, who even made an attempt on his life without accomplishing his purpose, or who wounded himself, unless he did it through impatience of grief; through weariness of life; through disorder, madness, or shame; or through some other justifiable cause, was to suffer death: but if his attempt were made through any of the afore-

[1] See Digests or Corpus Juris Civilis, Lib. XLVIII. Tit. xxi. Parag. 3.

"De Bonis eorum, qui ante sententiam mortem sibi consciverunt."

[κ] Concerning prisoners see Dig. L. XLVIII. Tit. iii. Parag. 14. and soldiers see Dig. L. XLVIII. Tit. xix. Par. 38. and Dig. XLIX. xvi. 6.

mentioned causes, he was to be dismissed with ignominy and shame." Here it is to be observed that such causes of suicide as were allowable in others, were punishable in the soldier; not that any account was taken of the inherent guilt of suicide in this case, but because a soldier's desertion of his life was in a peculiar sense a desertion of his post, and therefore to be punished.

This is the substance of Roman law respecting suicide, as it is to be found in the Code of Justinian. It differs widely (as the judicious [L] Montesquieu has observed) in its principle of punishment from that of the Greeks. For beside the cutting off the hand which perpetrated the suicide, which was done in pure abhorrence of the crime itself, the law [M] of Plato commands, "that he who has killed himself through mere sloth and the weakness of a timid mind shall be punished." The Roman law acquits (that is, takes no notice of the matter) when it is done through any weakness of mind, and only punishes, when it is committed through a criminal remorse or despair; that is, when the suicide flies from public condemnation. Plato's law was formed on the idea then prevalent in the Grecian states, that cowardice and faint-heartedness were the greatest of faults; and consequently what proceeded from them the greatest object of censure. The Romans on the contrary had lost all their fine feelings of honour and courage before ever they made express laws against suicide; and consequently when from various motives mentioned above it abounded among them and was often perpetrated to the detriment of avaritious Emperors and their minions—they considered the act itself in an interested light, and punished it as an offence against the royal treasury: on which single principle (the case of soldiers excepted) all the rescripts of the Emperors respecting its punishment were founded.

It appears then upon the whole review of Roman suicide, that this Roman death, as it has been called, was very little practised or encouraged in the pure ages of the republic;—that it sprang up on the introduction of Grecian philosophy, when the integrity of Roman manners and a reverence for religion were on the decline;—that being once established on principle, it was perpetually

[L] Spirit of Laws, Book XXIX. C. ix.

[M] Though this was not an established law, only a law of Plato's imaginary republic.

called forth into practice under the first Emperors by the peculiar circumstances of the times ;—that it then became so frequent, as to render it necessary to check its alarming progress ;—that the latter Romans however had little or no idea of any crime in suicide, but where it was detrimental to the interests of the state ;—that the corrupted part of the community, as entertaining Epicurean sentiments, could have no principle to restrain them, whenever prompted to its commission by the worst of selfish motives, or by a dereliction of their sensual pleasures ;—that the good and well-intentioned part, as being chiefly favourers of Stoicism, embraced that particular branch of its doctrine with avidity, which, whenever public affairs were in a state of confusion or tyranny, and there was reason to expect a diminution of their own dignity, enabled them not only to escape the impending evil without a diminution of credit, but even to gain fresh wreaths of fame in the bosom of suicide. But let it not be forgotten, that before things took this turn, the simplicity of ancient manners, the firmness of the Roman character, and all reverence for the Gods as the disposers of human events were for the most part lost in Rome ;—that in their stead, a total neglect of religion, an opinion, that the Gods neither interfered in nor regarded human actions, had taken place on Epicurean principles ; and on Stoical ones, a confused notion of a resolution of the soul and body of man into their original elements of earth, air, fire, and water ; together with an idea, that the reward of virtue was placed in a conscious rectitude of mind, without respect to any future retribution. As the way then was open to the Epicurean to live exactly as he pleased and to die how and when he pleased, so was the Stoic also to be so far master of his own life and actions, as to judge for himself of the propriety of living or dying ; having little grounds of future hope or expectation of reward for any patient endurance of unmerited sufferings. What an encouragement then to every laudable exertion is the Christian philosopher's reliance on divine support under affliction and innocent sufferings ! what a spur to his activity in all honourable pursuit is his trust in future rewards for present disappointments ! and how must the union of such hopes and expectations provoke his zeal, strengthen his confidence and confirm his patience, whilst he is treading in the paths of integrity and virtue !

C H A P VIII.

Many of the most celebrated suicides of antiquity may be exculpated on heathen principles.—Three classes of ancient suicides:—1. Selfish, merely to avoid pain, &c.—2. Necessary (as it was deemed) in vindication of their own honour:—3. Dignified and disinterested for the good of others.—Degrees of censure due to the first class various; but of absolute praise none.—Their best apology was incurable sickness; but this done away in modern times by the comforts of religion.—Examples of the second class.—Reflections on the same.—Examples of the third class.—The best examples of antiquity no apology for modern suicide.—Comparison between the motives to ancient and modern suicide—to the great discredit of the latter.

THOUGH it has been frequently asserted, that the different degrees of illumination between the ancients and moderns in respect to their prospects of futurity were sufficient to palliate that self-destruction in the former, which would be unpardonable in the latter; yet it may not be improper to appropriate this chapter to an inquiry into the motives, which influenced some illustrious personages of antiquity (whose cases have not hitherto been mentioned) to commit suicide. From whence it will be easy to determine, whether the race of modern suicides (even Christianity apart) can boast the pretensions of many of the ancients?—When a searcher into the records of antiquity finds many celebrated names among the list of self murderers, he must either be inclined to wish the case were otherwise, or that he might be able to exculpate such from all blame and censure. But it will not be difficult in many cases to do the latter; provided it be carefully remembered, that a judgment of the actions of the ancients (as far as regards themselves) is not to be grounded on “our own,” but on “their” opportunities of information and knowledge: from whence it follows, that the same action committed in different ages of the world will wear a very different aspect, as well as deserve very different degrees of approbation or censure.

Now the general herd of ancient suicides, whose examples are so frequently (but improperly) adduced in extenuation of the crime in modern days, may be ranked

ranked under three heads. First; the "selfish"—merely to avoid pain and personal sufferings of body or mind: Second; the "necessary" (as it was deemed)—in vindication of their own honour: Third; the "dignified and disinterested," for the benefit of others. Various are the degrees of censure due to the first mentioned body of self-murderers; for as to praise, the best of this class can scarce be said to deserve any. The most excusable cause of all under this description seems to be an emaciated body; when a man labours under the tortures of an incurable disorder, and seems to live only to be a burden to himself [N] and his friends. This was thought a sufficient apology for the action in ancient days and can only be combated in modern ones by the force and energy of that true religion, which both points out the duty and the reward of implicit resignation. But as for the other two classes of suicides, their influencing causes might be oftentimes disinterested and frequently meritorious. A few miscellaneous examples shall first be produced of those ranking under the second division, who sacrificed their lives to the preservation of their honour (as it seemed in their eyes) and who killed themselves to avoid indignity and shame.

Numerous was this class, as it comprehends (among others) all those, who despatched themselves after a defeat to avoid falling into the hands of an enemy. This was a most frequent cause of suicide among the ancients, and consigned many a character to fame, which would otherwise have fallen undistinguished in the mass of common [O] extinction. Whether it ought to be mentioned as an exertion of their superior heroism, or rather as a deviation from the more amiable softness of the sex, yet the fact is certain, that the females have often stood foremost and distinguished themselves in these sanguinary measures. At the taking of Carthage [P], when Asdrubal the Carthaginian general had meanly deserted his post and fled in private to Scipio, in hopes of procuring his personal safety, the undaunted spirit of his wife was roused to a state of desperate indignation. Resolved to supply in her own person the want of spirit and resolution in her husband, she ordered the temple, in which she and a few troops

[N] Examples of this sort have been produced in different parts of this work; and as there is no variety in the cases, there is no need of further mention of them here.

[O] *Nolo virum facili redimit qui sanguine famam,
Hunc volo, laudari qui sine morte potest.*—Martial.

[P] Rollin's Ancient History, who quotes Appian.

had taken shelter, to be set on fire. When this was done and she had arrayed herself in her richest robes, holding her two children in her hands she addressed herself to Scipio (who had now surrounded the building with his troops) in the following terms. "You, o Roman, are only acting according to the laws of open war: but may the Gods of Carthage and those in concert with them, punish that false wretch, who by such a base desertion has betrayed his country, his Gods, his wife, his children! Let him adorn thy gay triumph; let him suffer in the sight of all Rome those indignities and tortures he so justly merits: but let him first behold in "me", what "he" ought to have done." She then grasping her children in her arms rushed with them into the thickest of the flames, and was followed by all the foldiers.

A most bloody scene of mixt murder and suicide took place in the palace of Nicocles, king of Paphos in Cyprus on the approach [Q] of king Ptolemy's officers, who came to dispossess him of his throne and life. The unhappy prince, finding himself destitute of defence, became his own executioner. But neither the entreaties nor kind treatment of Ptolemy's agents could prevail on his queen Axithea to survive her deceased lord. She first slew her daughters with her own hands, and after having prevailed on the princesses (sisters of Nicocles) to despatch themselves, Axithea plunged the dagger into her own bosom. Moved at the sight of so much horror and bloodshed, the husbands of the deceased princesses soon agreed to follow their fate; and having first set fire to the four corners of the palace fell on their own swords. What an horrid scene to be acted (and by women too!) in the favourite abode of the Cyprian divinity, where the loves and the graces alone should have sported and played [R]!

[Q] In the wars between Ptolemy and Antigonus.—See Diod. Sic. B. XX.

[R] Cyprus also furnishes another extraordinary instance of suicide (though not so horrid and murderous as the former) in the person of that king Ptolemy, to whom Cato was sent by the Romans to demand his kingdom and his treasures. He knew resistance would be vain; and ill-brooking either to descend from the sovereign dignity into a private station, or to deliver up those treasures, which were dearer to him than his life, he took the resolution of sinking together with his riches to the bottom of the sea; and for this purpose went on ship-board, meaning to have holes bored through the bottom of the ship, that all might sink together. But though he continued firm in his own resolution of dying, he could not find in his heart to murder (as it were) his beloved treasures; and therefore he returned on shore again and quickly after drank poison.—(See Rollin's Anc. Hist.)

Two instances of suicide are to be found in the two great orators of Athens, Isocrates and Demosthenes. When Isocrates saw the approaching bondage of his country under Philip of Macedon, he courted death by a total abstinence from food rather than live enslaved with the rest of his [s] countrymen.—But the great Demosthenes seems to have been more selfish in his suicide. He outlived the dominion of Philip and Alexander over Greece; but when Antipater (Alexander's successor in Macedon) required the Athenians to deliver up their orators, the dread of personal indignities and slavery prevailed beyond what his feelings for his country's liberty and honour had done before; and he now drank off that poison, which he would have swallowed (like Isocrates) with more consistency and dignity in his death after the battle of Cheronea.

The Romans perhaps never showed a more dastardly spirit of mean and cruel revenge, than in their persecution of Hannibal from one court to another, after he was oppressed with years and sunk into obscurity. He had reason to suspect from their pitiful behaviour, that if ever they should get him into their possession, they would inflict such indignities upon him, as it would be inconsistent with his former fame and character to endure. Being betrayed by his host king Prusias, he had recourse to the poison, which he always kept about him concealed in a ring [r] against sudden emergencies. “ And now (says he) we [u] will free
“ the Roman people from their constant anxiety, since they cannot have patience
“ to wait for the death of an old man. Flaminius will obtain neither a great
“ nor a memorable victory over one like me unarmed and betrayed. O how
“ great a proof of the alteration of Roman manners is the transaction of this
“ day! The ancestors of these people warned king Pyrrhus, a powerful enemy,
“ with a victorious army in Italy—to beware of private treachery and poison;—
“ and their descendants send a man of consular dignity as ambassador to Prusias,
“ urging him to break the laws of hospitality, and to betray or to murder his

[s] The time of his slavery however would not have been tedious, as he was then at least ninety years of age.

[r] Finem animæ, quæ res humanas miscuit olim,
Non gladii, non faxa dabunt, nec tela, sed ille
Cannarum vindex et tanti sanguinis ultor
Annulus—Juv. Sat. X.

[u] See Livy Lib. XXXIX. 51.

“aged guest.” What a sting is contained in these dying words of the unfortunate Hannibal!

Mithridates, who maintained such a vigorous war against the power of Rome, being obliged at length to fly before the army of Pompey, presented a box of poison to all his friends and favourites, that none of them might fall alive into the enemies hands, unless by his own consent. The king finding himself abandoned by every ally, and that his affairs were growing desperate, retired into the apartments of the women, where he first administered poison to his wives and daughters and then to himself; but it taking [x] no effect on himself, he had recourse to his sword with which he accomplished the tragical deed.

When Sardanapalus [y] was in great danger of being detrudd from his throne, he conceived a magnificent and luxurious mode of self-murder worthy of the extravagance and dissoluteness of his former life. He erected a funeral pile of great height in his palace and adorned it with the most sumptuous and costly ornaments. In the middle of this building was a chamber of one hundred feet in length, built of wood; in which a number of golden couches and tables were spread. At one of these he reclined himself with his wife, while his numberless concubines occupied the rest. The building was encompassed round at some distance with large beams and thick wood to prevent all egress from the place. Much combustible matter and an immense pile of wood were also placed within, together with an infinite quantity of golden and silver talents, of royal vestments and costly apparel, of rich furniture, of curious ornaments, and all the apparatus of luxury and magnificence. All being completed, and he himself with his women remaining in the center, he commanded the whole to be set on fire, which continued burning to the fifteenth day. The multitude without the inclosure were in astonishment at the tremendous scene, and at the immense clouds of incense and smoke, which issued from the flames. It was given out abroad, that Sardanapalus was engaged in offering some extraordinary sacrifices; while the attendants

[x] Mithridates was much skilled in medicine and is said to have invented and taken so many antidotes against poison (fearing the treachery of others) that it had no effect upon him when used by himself.

[y] The following account of Sardanapalus's death is taken from Athenæus, Lib. XII.

within alone knew, that this dissolute prince was putting such a splendid end to his [z] effeminate life.

When Antony had lost the world for love of Cleopatra, the scene that accompanied his ensuing suicide is too affecting to be passed over in silence here, though so well known to every reader. The struggles of his rage and jealousy against Cleopatra; the returns and violent transports of his love on the false report of her death; his lamentations that he should be taught by a woman how to die; his demands on his faithful Eros [A] to fulfil his promise of killing him, whenever required; Eros's seemingly drawing his sword for that purpose, but plunging its point into his own breast; his mourning over the corpse of his affectionate and faithful freedman; his ineffectual wound given to himself; his hearing in this interval of the revival of Cleopatra; his eagerness to see her; his being drawn up by ropes to her chamber-window; and at length his expiring in her arms; these are all circumstances, which make us forget for a while his destructive ambition, and fill us with a momentary compassion for those misfortunes, which were the fruits of his own follies and vices. They affect us with more pity than they even seem to have done the treacherous queen herself, though sensible that she was the cause of all Antony's misfortunes, of his defeat, his death; but who would yet fain have lived herself and made her peace with Octavius. For it was no weariness of life or its enjoyments, but the "non triumphabor"

[z] The inscription on Sardanapalus's tomb (which was destroyed by Cyrus) was to the following purport. "I have reigned, and as long as I beheld the light of the sun, I ate, I drank, and I indulged in all sensuality; because I knew the short time that mortals have to live; and that even this span is disturbed with vicissitude and trouble; and as I knew that others must quickly enjoy the fruits and delights of my present possessions, I never ceased a moment from the most luxurious indulgence."—It is also said, that when Alexander pitched his camp at Anchiale, there was a monument near the city erected to the memory of Sardanapalus; where an image was carved in the stone-work, having the thumb and a finger of its right hand joined, as if making some sound or noise with them; and that these words were inscribed in Assyrian characters. "Sardanapalus, the son of Anacyndarax, founded Anchiale and Tyre in one day. Eat, drink, and be merry; as for the rest, it is not worth a snap of the finger."—ATHENÆUS, Lib. XII.

[A] The situation of slaves, when such a demand was made on them by their masters (as it was frequently) was truly delicate. If they complied, they were punished as the murderers of their masters; if they refused (and their masters happened to survive) they were sure of undergoing his severe displeasure. They therefore often killed their masters first and themselves afterwards, or in some instances (as in Eros's) dropt dead at their master's feet.

alone that occasioned the application of Cleopatra's [B] asp; of Sophonisba's deadly bowl, of Boadicea's empoisoned draught, and of the accelerated deaths of a multitude of both sexes in all ages and countries, who dreaded the chains of slavery [C] and triumph.

But a scene of more desperate fury seems no where to have existed than among the inhabitants of Xanthus in Asia. The city Xanthus before which M. Brutus's army lay was in flames. That general ordered his own soldiers to assist in extinguishing them and to save the inhabitants. But it seems that those within the walls were on a sudden seized with a wonderful fit of despair, which the mild behaviour and clemency of Brutus during the siege could no ways occasion or justify. Their phrensy could be no otherwise [D] represented than by calling it a most determined resolution to die. Women and children, bond-men and free, those of all ages and conditions, strove to force away the soldiers, who came to their assistance, and gathering stubble, reeds, and all combustibles, they spread and fed the flame over the whole city, exciting its devastation by every

[B] Livy relates, that when Cleopatra was purposely treated with great indulgence by Octavius, she used to exclaim "Non triumphator."—Fragments at the end of his History.

* daret ut catenis

+ Fatale monitum; quæ generosius

Perire quærens, nec muliebriter

Expavit enssem, nec latentes

Classe citâ reparavit oras.

Ausa et jacentem visere regiam

Vultu sereno fortis, et asperas

Tractare serpentes, ut atrum

Corpore combiberet venenum,

Deliberatâ morte ferocior:

Sævis Liburnis scilicet invidens

Privata deduci superbo

Non humilis mulier triumpho.—HOR. L. I. Ode 37.

[C] But Zenobia, queen of the east, who was a woman of uncommon talents and accomplishments, and also of wonderful courage and intrepidity, did not fly from the reverse of her fortunes by suicide, but patiently submitted to the result of conquest, and graced the triumph of Aurelian.—Characterus also had before submitted to his fate, and suffered himself to be carried prisoner to Rome in the reign of Claudius.

[D] The Xanthians (says Brutus in a letter) suspecting my kindness have made this country a "Grave of Despair."—See Plutarch's Life of M. Brutus.

* Scil. Cæsar.

+ Scil. Cleopatram.

possible method. In the mean time they employed every means that could be devised of destroying themselves. Men, women, boys, and little children leaped into the flames, threw themselves from the walls, fell on their parents' swords, opened their bosoms and entreated to be slain. Women were found with children hanging by their necks, themselves hung up and grasping torches in their hands, with which they had first fired their houses. Brutus himself rode round the city, stretching forth his hands to the inhabitants, inviting them to accept of terms of honour and clemency, and entreating them to spare the town, or at least their own lives. He wept at the horrid scene and proclaimed a reward to any of his soldiers, who would recover [E] and save the life of a Xanthian: but all was of no avail; and this was a new species of war, in which the besieger fought to save the lives of the besieged.

The best defence that could be set up in former times in behalf of these self-devotions rather than submit to grace a triumph or to live in slavery was "that it encouraged a love of liberty and freedom, tended to inspire troops in the hour of battle, and especially led commanders to exert every nerve of ability and courage; since if they neither conquered nor fell in battle, they were in some measure expected, as they valued fame, to die by their own hands." Yet still the words which Q. Curtius puts into the mouth of Darius on that king's failure of success, are of very general and forcible application against all suicide of this kind. "There wait (says that king) the issue of my fate. You wonder perhaps, that I do not terminate my own life. But I choose rather to die by another's crime than by [F] my own." The reflections also of Cleomenes king of Sparta, at a time when his fortunes seemed almost desperate, and he was much urged by a friend to despatch himself, are full of truth and propriety. "By seeking this easy and ready kind of death, (says he to his adviser) you think to appear brave and courageous. But better men than you or I have been oppressed by fortune and borne down by multitudes.

[E] The Xanthians seem to have inherited a spirit of desperate resolution; since in a former siege of their city by one of Cyrus's lieutenants, after having enclosed their wives, children and servants in the citadel to which they set fire, they desperately rushed on the enemy in order to be cut in pieces themselves.—HEROD. Lib. I.

[F] Ego legem fati mei expecto; forsitan mireris, quod vitam non finiam. Alieno scelere quam meo mori malo.—Q. CURTIUS, Lib. V.

" He

“ He that sinks under toil or yields to affliction, or is overcome by the opinions
 “ and reproaches of men, gives way in fact to his own effeminacy and cowardice.
 “ A voluntary death is never to be chosen as a relief from action, but as exemplary in itself; it being base to live or die only for ourselves. The death to
 “ which you now invite us, is only proposed as a release from present misery,
 “ but conveys with it no signs of bravery or prospects of advantage.” Cleomenes
 determined to live, but his friend, not convinced by his arguments, ran himself
 through the body. However at a future period, when his fortunes were grown
 still more desperate, Cleomenes forgot his own good maxims and sheltered himself
 from further misfortunes in the [G] bosom of suicide. The tragedian [H] likewise
 makes an Hercules, (whom few will accuse of cowardice or want of resolution)
 argue as follows. “ I have considered, and though oppressed with misfortunes
 “ I determine thus. Let no one depart out of life through fear of what
 “ may happen to him. For he, who is not able to resist evils, will fly (like a
 “ coward) from the darts of an enemy.”

But there was a sense of honour also in private life, which led to the necessity
 (as it was then thought) of dying, either out of respect to their “ lords and chieftains,”
 or out of a dread of submitting, however involuntarily, to what might
 be deemed disgraceful and infamous; or as was sometimes the case, out of vanity
 or resentment. A few miscellaneous examples of this sort follow; which shall
 commence again with the female sex. An high sense of chastity seems to have
 inspired those noble virgins of Macedon, who are said by Cicero (Orat. de Prov.
 Con.) to have thrown themselves into wells and submitted to voluntary deaths
 rather than become objects of a Roman governor’s lust. The spirit and resolution
 of the following noble lady is worthy notice. When [I] Theoxena the
 daughter of a prince of Thessaly, whose father and husband had been murdered
 by a Philip [K] king of Macedon, found herself and family in great danger of
 suffering indignities and violence from the tyrant, she determined rather to put
 an end to all their lives than that they should fall into the hands of Philip. Her

[G] See Life of Cleomenes in Plutarch.

[H] Euripides in Hercules furens.

[I] Livy, L. XL. 4.

[K] Not the father of Alexander, but one of a later period.

husband Poris (for she was married a second time) persuaded her to attempt an escape from Macedon rather than execute so bloody a purpose; and accordingly a ship was prepared to convey them secretly away. But being detained at sea by contrary winds, the emissaries of the king were now at hand to seize the vessel and the fugitives, when Theoxena, eager to execute her purposes of death, produced a dagger and a box of poison, and placing them both before the ship's company said, "Death is now our only remedy and means of vengeance. Let each take the method that best pleases himself of avoiding the tyrant's pride, cruelty and lust. Come on my brave companions and family, seize the sword, or drink of the cup, as you prefer an instantaneous or gradual death." The enemies were at hand and the adviser of their deadly fate was urgent. Some fell on the sword, others drank the poison, till all had accomplished their deaths; when last of all Theoxena and her husband in a close embrace plunged into the sea: and thus an empty vessel was all that remained for the plunderers.

Indignant was the spirit of one Titus Jubellius Taurea a Campanian, who disdaining to be spared, as he might have been, amid the wanton effusion of the blood of his fellow-citizens, killed his wife, his children [L] and himself, in order to fix a stronger odium on the cruelty of a tyrannical governor.—The self-murder of Empedocles, the Sicilian philosopher and poet, was the offspring of pure vanity; for he threw himself into the flames of Ætna in hopes of having [M] divine honours paid to his memory.—An high sense and nicety of honour plunged his own dagger into the breast of Dioxippus, when he was falsely accused of so pitiful a crime [N] as theft.—

When

[L] "Why, says Jubellius, (throwing himself in the sight of the Roman governor) why do you delay in the midst of all this carnage to point your bloody dagger against me; that so you might have it to boast, that you had slain a braver man than yourself?—I would fain do it (replied the governor) but am restrained by order of the senate.—But the fathers have not restrained me (replies Jubellius). See then a spectacle, which will be grateful to your eyes, but beyond the conception of your daftardly soul!"—on saying which he first killed his family and then himself.—VAL. MAX. III. ii.

[M] ————— Deus immortalis haberi
Dum cupit Empedocles ardentem frigidum Ætnam
Infuluit. ————— Hor. de Arte Poet.

[N] Hinc ad criminationem invidorum adaptæ sunt aures Alexandri; & post paucos dies inter epulas aureum poculum ex composito subducitur, ministrique quasi amississent, quod amoverant, regem adeunt.

When Imilcon the Carthaginian general expected to complete his conquest of Sicily by the reduction of Syracuse, a sudden plague, the messenger (says the historian) of a superior power, to teach the proudest mortal to confess his own weakness, seized his brave and victorious army; in which it made such ravages as to oblige the unwilling general to retreat with the shattered remains, and to return to Carthage. Bitterly bewailing his own fate, he accused the gods, as the authors of this misfortune. "The enemy may rejoice (says he) for they have reason; but they must not glory. We return victorious over them and are only defeated by the plague. But the disaster, which touches me most sensibly is my own survival of so many gallant soldiers. Yet think not, o my countrymen, that I have survived hitherto through a fondness for life, or for any other purpose than to accompany home the wretched dregs of my army, who would have met with additional disasters, if deprived of my protection and guidance. This being now accomplished nothing remains, but to follow my brave companions, who lie dead before the walls of Syracuse." He then retired to his own house, shut his doors against the citizens (who would have prevented his bloody resolution) and gave himself the [o] fatal blow. Such behaviour, though often dignified with the appellation of magnanimity, appears in this and numberless other instances rather to have proceeded from disappointment, vexation and despair.

"There was a custom among the Gauls, (as Cæsar relates) whereby a number of inferior people addicted themselves to the protection and patronage of one military chieftain, whose fortunes they were to follow upon all occasions. The conditions of association were, that they were to enjoy all the conveniences of life under the auspices of this leader, and if any violence should be offered him (meaning principally either his being killed or taken by an enemy) they engaged either to suffer the same or to kill themselves. Nor was there ever an instance known (says Cæsar) where any one refused to die, his leader with whom he had

adeunt. Sæpe minus est constantiæ in rumore quàm in culpâ: conjectum oculorum quibus ut fur destinabatur Dioxippus ferre non potuit; & quum excessisset convivio, literis conscriptis, quæ regi redderentur, ferro se interemit.—Q. CURTIUS, L. IX. c. vii.

[o] Diodorus, L. XIV.

thus

thus leagued himself being [P] slain." Thus the Gauls thought it a disgrace to survive their leader. This engagement to suicide on their general's being killed was certainly a strong provocative to courage, that they might defend the life of their leader, on which their own of necessity depended. The custom indeed was every where prevalent, that dependents and slaves should sacrifice their own lives at the tomb of their deceased lord; and to do further honour to the departed, combats of gladiators were also introduced, as it was a common notion that the soul after its departure from the body took delight in such bloody immolations. But this covenanted suicide of the Gauls was voluntarily accomplished by the troops of Sertorius on that general's demise. When Sertorius retired into Spain on the defeat of the Marian party by Sylla, he behaved with his usual gallantry at the head of the Celtiberians and fugitives from Italy, who fought under his standard; but at length being treacherously assassinated by one of his own officers, his brave followers, disdaining to obey any other leader, sacrificed their lives (by despatching one another) to the manes of their departed general [Q].

Some degree of credit may be given to the best of the foregoing instances of suicide, as far as it can be supposed that they were influenced by public and

[P] *Aliâ ex parte oppidi Adcantuanus, qui summam imperii tenebat cum D. C. devotis, quos illi "Soldurios*" appellant, quorum hæc est conditio, ut omnibus in vitâ commodis unâ cum his fruantur, quorum se amicitia dederint. Si quid iis per vim accidat, aut eundem casum unâ ferant aut sibi mortem consciscant. Neque adhuc hominum memoriâ repertus est quisquam, qui eo interfecto cujus se amicitia devovisset, mori recusaret.*—CÆSAR de Bello Gall. L. III.

[Q] "I cannot close the history of the modern Catalans (ancient Celtiberians) more properly than with the epitaph of their countrymen, who served under Sertorius, and after the murder of that great man, disdaining to obey another leader, sacrificed themselves to his manes. It is taken from the annals of Catalonia. *Hic multæ turmæ, quæ se manibus Q. Sertorii & terræ mortalium omnium parenti devovere, dum eo sublato superesse tæderet, & fortiter pugnando invicem cecidere, morte ad præfens optatâ, jacent. Valetè posteri.*"—See SWINBURN'S Travels through Spain, Let. IX.

But perhaps it is more probable, that these devoted victims to their general were Romans rather than Celtiberians;—the companions of his flight and fortunes;—despairing Marians, who now gave up all for lost, but for whom the camp of Sertorius had hitherto been the refuge. In confirmation of this Plutarch in his Life of Sertorius tells us, that most of the Spaniards after his death went over to the enemy.

* Hence our word Soldiers.

disinterested motives; since in that case they might be said by their examples to have inspired a love of freedom in others, and to have recommended a perseverance and constancy in virtue, from their being ready to sacrifice their lives rather than exist in a state of subjection and slavery, or what they deemed disgrace and ignominy. But they had yet to learn, that the mere chances of war or fortune can never engender reproach, and that there is greater magnanimity in a patient and dignified endurance of unmerited sufferings than in a precipitate flight from all combat with affliction.

The miscellaneous examples now to be mentioned belong to the last class of suicides, or those who acted in their self-murder on apparently dignified and disinterested motives. Two suicides of note are to be found among the ancient legislators, who made this voluntary sacrifice of their lives to maintain the dignity and importance of their own institutions. Charondas, (who was the legislator of Thurium in Græcia major) to encourage a proper freedom of debate, had made it death to come armed into an assembly of the states. One day coming himself in haste to a convention without having first laid aside his sword, he was rebuked by some one present, as a transgressor of his own laws. Stung with the justness of the imputation, he instantly plunged his sword (the cause of his offence) into his own breast, both as a sacrifice to the violated majesty of the law, and a tremendous example of disinterested justice: trusting moreover thus to seal with his own blood a strict observance in others of his wholesome institutions.

When Lycurgus had accomplished his great work of legislation in Sparta, he took the following method of rendering his system as unchangeable and immortal, as he thought could be devised by human forecast. Giving out that it was necessary for him to consult the Delphian oracle relative to his new laws, he took an oath of all the Spartan magistrates and people, that they would observe and keep his laws inviolate "till his return." He went accordingly to consult the oracle, and having sent back the answer in writing to Sparta—"that the laws were excellent and would render the people great and happy, "who should observe them"—he took the resolution of never [R] returning himself

[R] Plutarch, in his *Life of Lycurgus*, supposes him to have reasoned on this occasion on Stoical principles as they were in after-times established. "He was now arrived at a time of life (says

himself thither, that so the people might never be released from the obligation of their oath; and accordingly he starved himself on his voyage homewards.—These were both professional instances of suicide, which must be allowed at least to have been wholly disinterested, being founded on the desire of benefiting their fellow-creatures at the expence of their own lives.

Honourable was the death, which Codrus king of Athens so assiduously courted to render his subjects victorious. When success had been announced* by the oracle to that nation, whose king should be first slain by the enemy, Codrus instantly ran towards the enemy's camp, in the disguise of a private soldier; where picking a quarrel with the first man he met, he provoked him to slay him. His death therefore, though accomplished by another's hand, was an actual and voluntary suicide for the honour of his kingdom.

When Themistocles had suffered many indignities and at length banishment from his country notwithstanding his great services, he placed himself under the protection of the Persian monarch, whom he promised in return to assist in his wars against Greece. The command of the enterprise was offered to Themistocles, who now began to be staggered in his resolution. Unwilling to fully the former glory of his arms by raising them against his own countrymen, and ashamed of not fulfilling his unwary [s] promises to his royal and munificent protector, he saw only one way of extricating himself out of such a dilemma, which would be consistent with his former character. He therefore called his friends together, and having hospitably entertained them, he sacrificed to the Gods; after which he took a solemn leave of the company and drinking

“Plutarch) when though to live longer might be tolerable, yet a “wise” man would die without regret; especially when he considered, that to die “seasonably” is to die in the midst of honour and glory. That a good statesman and patriot should seek to make his death itself some how or other useful to his country. As therefore the oath was to be binding “till his return,” so even the manner of his preventing that return, was not to be without its meaning. His death by abstinence was to be a practical lesson of the great principle pervading his whole code of laws, which was “Temperance.”

[s] Themistocles, after having promised the king, that he would assist him in oppressing Greece, was sent to reside at Magnesia in Asia minor with rich appointments. The royal revenues of Magnesia were appropriated to find him in bread, those of Lampfacus in wine, and those of Myuns in provision, together with those of two others for clothes and furniture.—See Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos.

sonne

some poison quickly [τ] expired. His death was certainly a sacrifice to the good of his country, which he might greatly have harrassed with the troops of Persia at his command. But his glory would have been still more untarnished, had he never entered at all into treaty (however he might conceive himself to have been oppressed at home) with the public enemy of his country. In this case he would probably have been recalled with honour to head the troops of his fellow-citizens.

When an Otho killed himself to prevent the further effusion of Roman blood in the imperial contest, he preferred the nicer feelings of humanity, not only to the dignity and splendour of a crown, but to his own existence. His soldiers pleaded warmly and affectionately for his prolonging his life to lead them to a second engagement; that there were still hopes of success in their valour and fidelity, and that his [υ] desperate resolutions could but be executed after a second failure of success. But his reply breathed more of the spirit of an old Roman than of the dregs of those times in which he lived. "I rejoice more (says he) in this proof of your affection than in your first salutations of me as Emperor. "Deny me not therefore the glory of laying down my own life to preserve yours. The more hope there is left, the more honourable is my early retirement; since it is by my death alone, that I can prevent the further effusion of Roman blood and restore peace and tranquillity to a distracted empire: and thus to show myself in some measure worthy of that empire, by being ready to die for its peace and security." He soon after plunged a dagger into his breast with great firmness [x] and intrepidity.

Such

[τ] This is Plutarch's account; but Cornelius Nepos following Thucydides says, that he died a natural death at Magnesia; though Thucydides allows the report of his having taken poison under his difficulties.

[υ] The affection and resolution of an obscure and private soldier was very remarkable, who standing before Otho with his drawn sword spake thus. "Behold in my action an instance of the unshaken fidelity of all your soldiery. There is not one of us but would strike thus to serve thee;"—and immediately he stabbed himself to the heart. Many private soldiers after Otho's death gave the same proof of affection to their deceased lord.—See Plutarch's Life of Otho.

[x] Hunc animum (inquit Otho)—hanc virtutem vestram ultra periculis obijceré nimis grande vitæ meæ pretium puto. Quanto plus spei ostenditis, tanto pulchrior mors erit.—Alii imperium diutius tenuerunt, nemo tam fortiter reliquerit.—An ego tantum Romanæ pubis tot egregios exercitus sterni
O o 2 rursus

Such then was the nature of that ancient suicide on which so much stress has been laid by its advocates in modern days. To censure all these examples indiscriminately, without paying any regard to the opinions, the customs, or degree of knowledge then existing in the world, would be to pass too severe a sentence upon them. On the other hand it would be as absurd to allow their authority to have any weight in justification of modern suicide for reasons that have been so frequently mentioned. To draw together a set of counter-examples would be only to collect the names of all those, who have in all ages and in such numbers endured heavy afflictions or ill-fortune with patience and magnanimity. Indeed the influence of examples on either side, or the opinions and practices of the ancients in general in the present matter, are of little avail towards drawing a just conclusion for the use of modern times; since their obligations of morality were founded on such different principles. But still as there are so many of the present age, who will hear of no mode of arguing, but what proceeds from the laws of nature and is drawn alone from the shallows of human reason, it is some consolation (if not also a degree of confirmation of the point in view) to be able to discover from this copious survey of antiquity, that the modern suicide has very little to plead in his own behalf from ancient precedents. The suicide of old (where his death assigned him to any degree of credit and not rather to infamy) despatched himself, because he had been unsuccessful in the field of battle, had lost a town or an army; the modern one does the same, because he has lost a throw on the dice:—the former staked his life on the event of a battle; the latter does the same on the turn up of a card. The ancient hero put an end to his mortal existence rather than yield his person to grace the triumph of conquest; the modern man of honour departs out of life to defraud his injured creditors. The man of ancient virtue fought in the cause of public liberty and would not breathe after that expired; the man of modern dissipation as strenuously engages on the side of licentiousness, and when no longer able to maintain its dissolute empire rushes indignant from the scene of his sensual existence. Women of old died by their own hands to preserve an untainted chastity of manners; while the men of modern spirit voluntarily

rursus & reipublicæ eripi patiar?—TACITUS Hist. II. See a full account of Otho's voluntary death in Tacitus and Plutarch.

Sit Cato dum vivit sanè vel Cæsare major;

Dum moritur, nunquid major Othone fuit?—Says MARTIAL,

hazard

hazard their lives in defence of female prostitution. A disinterested love of their country led men of old to destroy themselves rather than offend against the dignity and authority of wholesome institutions; a complete love of themselves inspires many of the present generation to injure the laws of their country in a thousand shapes, and then to fly from the execution of their sentence by the stroke of self-murder. The suicide of the ancients was frequently grounded on some principle of genuine honour, dignity and patriotism; while the self-murder of the moderns too often originates in mere pride and disappointment, in sensuality, extravagance and consequent penury. In short as the one frequently arose from some exertion of probity and justice, from some principle of honest worth; so the other is to be traced to the haunts of the gamblers, to the brothels of vice and profligacy: it owes its birth to the extinction of virtuous principles, its nurture and alarming growth to the dereliction of all serious and religious impressions.

END OF THE FOURTH PART.

PART

P A R T V.

THE HISTORY OF SUICIDE BEGUN THROUGH MODERN TIMES, OR SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION: CONTAINING SOME ACCOUNT OF ITS PRACTICE IN THE FIRST AGES OF THE CHURCH; TOGETHER WITH OPINIONS OF FATHERS, DECREES OF COUNCILS, LAWS AND CUSTOMS CONCERNING IT. ITS PRESENT STATE IN SOME FOREIGN COUNTRIES; AND A FULL ACCOUNT OF ALL THAT CONCERNS IT IN ENGLAND.

C H A P. I.

The great prevalence of suicide in the Roman empire, whilst it continued heathen, and also among the Gothic nations who subverted it, familiarised the idea of its practice among Christian converts.—Hence a prejudice in its favour among some Christians on certain occasions, either to secure from the hazard of apostasy, or to procure the crown of martyrdom, or to preserve the crown of virginity.—Zeal of some Christians for voluntary martyrdom before Arrius Antoninus, a proconsul in Asia.—Opinions of Justin Martyr and Lactantius on the same.—Furious passion for suicide among the Donatists.—Sentiments of Augustin concerning them.—Virgin-suicides.—Pelagia.—Opinions of Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerom and Augustin on this matter.—Augustin's general sentiments of suicide.—Determinations of Councils and Canons made in reprobation of the practice.—No oblations to be received or masses to be said for suicides;—denied Christian burial; but the sin not deemed irremissible by these Councils.—Exposure of the body and burial with infamy obtains in most European states on religious accounts; to which has been added on civil ones, the confiscation of property.

IT has been seen in a former part, how prevalent the practice of suicide was in the Roman empire, whilst it continued heathen; and it has also been discovered, that its principle was equally deep-rooted in the breasts of those Scythian or Gothic nations, who were daily pouring down on the Roman provinces. Both the Romans then and their final conquerors agreed in the habits of frequent suicide, though they practised it on the most opposite principles;—the former to avoid evils in this life, the latter to gain [y] additional rewards in another. However inconsistent therefore its practice must be deemed with the doctrines of Christianity, yet the familiarity of the idea, joined to a certain desire then prevalent among many of blending heathen customs and philosophy with christian precepts, could not but excite some prejudices in its favour. These however did not arise from an [z] inherent desire of getting rid of life (which, as some have preposterously maintained, actuates the bulk of mankind) but from the cast and fashion of the times, which either entirely warp the mind from just principles of action, or lead it to interpret those principles according to the habits and practices of the age be they good or evil. For which reason an idea of the propriety of suicide on certain occasions might gain ground in the breast of a christian convert, who happened to be more fraught with a blind zeal than with the powers of discrimination and judgment; or who being ready to sink under a timidity and failure of spirit during some impending evil, might think it a duty incumbent on him to take shelter in suicide, as a refuge from the hazard of defection from the faith in Christ. Wherefore a dread of the want of resolution and constancy to endure the rage and torments of persecution without wavering;—a fear of losing the crown of virginity, or the crown of martyrdom, of both which the most enthusiastic notions were then entertained;—these were doubts and perplexities, which led many weak-minded, but well-meaning Christians to take refuge in suicide, either by destroying themselves with their own hands or throwing themselves unnecessarily in the way of persecution and death. Many good fathers of the church saw and lamented this mistaken conduct and very earnestly censured a practice (though they might be inclined sometimes to pity the individual who followed it) which was so inconsistent with the genuine spirit of the Gospel.

[y] See Part IV. c. ii. on the worshippers of Odin.

[z] See Part VI. c. i. on Donne's ideas of martyrdom and desires of getting rid of life.

The rescript of Trajan (by which it was commanded, "that Christians should not be sought out for punishment, but if openly accused by credible persons should be required to renounce the faith in Christ and to return to the religion of the empire, or suffer condemnation") was more mild in the intention of the emperor than in the progress of its execution. For whereas on the one side it seemed calculated to screen Christians from needless persecution, so on the other it necessarily condemned those to death, who "were" accused, unless they renounced their faith. But what is still more astonishing, even the designed lenity of this edict displeased the fervent zeal of many Christians, who feared they might be hereby cut off from the honour of martyrdom for want of accusers. Hence they were frequently led through the intemperance of their zeal to accuse themselves before the magistrates, and to demand that condemnation, which they might otherwise have escaped: and thus to become in effect voluntary suicides. A remarkable instance of this kind is recorded by Tertullian. When Arrius Antoninus was proconsul in Asia in the reign of Adrian, great numbers of Christians, who were inflamed with a desire of martyrdom, surrounded his tribunal in a body and [A] demanded their own condemnation. The Roman governor was struck with the novelty of such a scene, and seemed unwilling to condemn so many self-devoted victims. He ordered a few to be led away to punishment in hopes of deterring the rest; but finding them still resolute in their purpose, he regarded them with a mixture of astonishment and contempt for their obstinacy and madness. "Miserable wretches (says he) have you not then ropes and precipices sufficient to despatch yourselves without [B] giving me the trouble of condemning you?"

Now Justin Martyr [c], alluding to the above circumstance in his second apology for the Christians, says—"he will tell the proconsul, why such a

[A] The zeal for martyrdom has also led others on different occasions to cry out on the condemnation of their brethren, "We also are Christians."

[a] See Tertullian Lib. ad Scapulam. This little book was written to persuade Scapula (who was a Roman governor in Africa at the beginning of the third century) to desist from persecuting the Christians; "who (Tertullian tells him) wished for nothing so much as for martyrdom; and that unless the governor desisted, he would have the same thing happen to him as had befallen Antoninus in Asia;" and then after repeating the story he adds, "Hoc si placuerit & hic fieri, quid facies de tantis millibus hominum, tot viris ac feminis, omnis sexûs, omnis ætatis, omnis dignitatis, offerentibus se tibi? Quantis ignibus, quantis gladius opus erit?" &c. &c.

[c] Justin suffered martyrdom himself about An. Dom. 166.

"despatching

“ despatching of themselves as he recommended to the Christians, in order to
 “ save him the trouble of their condemnation, would not be lawful. Because
 “ we are taught, that God did not create the world to no purpose, but for the
 “ sake of mankind; and that as the Creator of the world has pleasure in those,
 “ who imitate his attributes, so He has an equal aversion to those, who embrace
 “ what is evil in word or deed. If then we should all think ourselves at liberty
 “ to kill ourselves, we become the authors, as far as in us lies, of extinguishing
 “ the race of man, and of leaving no one to perform his duty to God; which
 “ must be acting contrary to his divine will and pleasure. But if we are in-
 “ terrogated by torture, we do not deny ourselves to be unconscious of guilt;
 “ deeming it impious not to speak the truth in every thing, which we know to
 “ be acceptable to God.” It may be observed that Justin judiciously uses such
 a general argument alone against suicide, as might be supposed to have some
 weight with an Heathen, as well as with a Christian; well knowing, that any
 other immediately drawn from Christian precepts could have very little attention
 paid to it by the opposers of Christianity. He also maintains a just distinction
 between voluntary suicide, and being only ready to die rather than deny the
 truth, when called upon to maintain it; but he says nothing in defence of those,
 who surrounded the proconsul’s tribunal in eager and unnecessary pursuit of
 condemnation and martyrdom. A zeal indeed of this kind was neither encour-
 aged nor deemed other than rash and misguided by every sober-minded Christian.
 —“ It is a virtue (says Lactantius) [D] to despise death, but not so as to seek it;
 “ or (like many philosophers of great name) to bring it voluntarily upon our-
 “ selves, which is a wicked and impious deed. But when urged to the alter-
 “ native, either of forsaking God and relinquishing our faith, or of expecting
 “ all torture and death, then it is, that undaunted in spirit we defy that death
 “ with all its previous threats and terrors, which others fear. For this is
 “ virtue, this is that true constancy and resolution, which ought ever to be
 “ maintained, that no terror, no violence shall be able to estrange us from
 “ God.” This was placing the merit of martyrdom in its true light,—when it
 was necessarily endured for the truth’s sake, but not unnecessarily [E] accelerated.

[D] Div. Instit. L. VI. c. xvii. De vero Cultu. N. B. Lactantius wrote these Institutions about
 An. Dom. 320.

[E] “ When they persecute you in this city (says the greatest authority) flee ye to another.” —
 See the subject of Martyrdom more fully discussed in Part VI. C. i. on Donne, in answer to what that
 writer advances:—and also what is said on the same subject in Part III. C. ii. on Christianity.

But how contrary to this distinction was the furious zeal of the Donatists in coveting martyrdom; insomuch that they must be ranked amid the most voluntary suicides! The Donatists caused great confusion and trouble in the African church during the fourth and fifth centuries. They were not schismatics in point of doctrine, but their separation was occasioned by a dispute relative to the election of a Bishop of Carthage. The schism was a dreadful one, and pursued with fire and sword by people called [F] Circumcelliones and Circitores, who were the soldiers of the Donatists, and at once the strength and scandal of their party; till at length a decree of the emperor Honorius, which was executed with severity against them, was the cause of their decline and gradual extinction. That the Donatists had a strong propensity to self-murder and destroyed themselves in great numbers out of an enthusiastic zeal for martyrdom in honour of their sect, is agreed by all ecclesiastical historians. "To kill themselves (says Augustin) out of respect for martyrdom is their daily sport (*ludus quotidianus*)."—"Among the Heathens (says Baronius, as quoted by Donne) you may here and there find one Empedocles, who will burn himself; but among the Donatists there are swarms of such men (*talium hominum examina*) [G]." "The rage of the Donatists (says Gibbon [H], who paints from Augustin) was enflamed by a phrensy of a very extraordinary kind; and which, if it really prevailed among them in so extravagant a degree, cannot surely be paralleled in any country or in any age. Many of these fanatics were possessed with the horror of life and the desire of martyrdom; and they deemed it of little moment by what means or by what hands they perished, if their conduct was sanctified by the intention of devoting themselves to the glory of the true faith" (n. b. he should rather have said of their own sect) and the hope of eternal

[F] In Africâ fuerunt Circumcelliones & Circitores—genus hominum agreste, & famosissimæ audaciæ, non solum in alios immania facinora perpetrando, sed nec sibi eadem insanîa & feritate parcendo. Etenim nullibi sistebant, sed loca omnia circuibant, docentes, quemcunque hominem æ occidentem aut iubentem alteri ut seipsum occideret, esse martyrem.—SAYR's Thesaurus Casuum Conscientiæ, folio, 1628, Monasterii Westsaliæ.

[G] Fuerunt qui sibi percussores sub cupiditate falsi martyrii in suam perniciem conducebant. Inde etiam illi, qui ex altorum montium cæminibus viles animas projicientes, se præcipites dabant.—OPTATI Milevitani Episcopi, De Schismate Donatistarum adversus Parmenianum, Lib. III.

[H] See Hist. of Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. III. p. 401. 8vo.

“happinefs. Sometimes they rudely difturbed the feftivals and [i] profaned “the temples of paganiſm with the deſign of exciting the moſt zealous of the “idolaters to revenge the injured honour of their Gods. They ſometimes “forced their way into the courts of juſtice and compelled the affrighted judge “to give orders for their immediate execution. They frequently ſtopped tra- “vellers on the public highways and obliged them to inflict the ſtroke of mar- “tyrdom by the promiſe of a reward, if they conſented,—and by the threat of “instant death, if they refuſed to grant ſo very ſingular a favour. When they “were diſappointed of every other reſource, they announced the day, on which, “in the preſence of their friends and brethren, they ſhould caſt themſelves “headlong from ſome lofty rock; and many precipices were ſhown, which had “acquired fame by the number of theſe religious [k] ſuicides.” Theſe acts of violence were, as we may ſuppoſe, variously interpreted. The performers of them were ranked in the firſt liſt of martyrs by thoſe of their own party, who were as violent as themſelves; but they were utterly condemned by the moderate among them. We may be certain, that all other parties reprobated ſuch enthuſiaſm, and deemed its abettors no other than a ſet of religious madmen.

But

[i] The Council of Illiberis however (Grenada in Spain) which was held about An. Dom. 305, had in its 60th Canon deprived thoſe of the title of martyrs, who were killed for attempting to overthrow idols publicly.—*Si quis idola fregerit & ibidem fuerit occiſus, quatenus in Evangelio ſcriptum non eſt, neque invenitur ſub Apoſtoliſ unquam factum, placuit in numero eum non recipi martyrum.*—Concil. Maxima Coſtantiæ, Tom. I. An. Chriſti 305.

[k] The following is extracted from Ep. clxxxv. of Auguſtin to Boniface;—*De correptione Donatiſtarum.* Illi autem retribuentes mala pro bonis, quia illis conſulimus ad æternam ſalutem, etiam temporalem nobis conantur auferre; ſic amantes homicidia, ut in ſeipſis ea perficiant, quando in aliis perpetrare non poſſunt. Sicut enim caritas laborat eccleſiæ, ſic eos ab illâ perditione liberare, ut eorum nemo moriatur; ſic eorum laborat furor, aut nos occidere, ut ſuæ crudelitatis paſcant libidinem, aut etiam ſeipſos, ne peridiſſe videantur occidendorum hominum poteſtatem. Qui autem neſciunt conſuetudinem illorum, putant eos modò ſeipſos occidere, quando ab eorum inſaniſſimâ dominatione per occaſionem legum iſtarum, quæ pro unitate ſunt conſtitutæ, tanti populi liberantur. Qui autem ſciunt, & ante ipſas leges quid facere ſoleant, non eorum mirantur mortes, ſed recordantur mores; maxime quando adhuc cultus fuerat idolorum ad paganorum celeberrimas ſolemnitates ingentia turbarum agmina veniebant, non ut idola frangerent, ſed ut interficerentur a cultoribus idolorum. Nam illud ſi acceptâ legitimâ poteſtate facere vellent, ſi quid iis accidiſſet, poſſent habere qualemcumque umbram nominis martyrum; ſed ad hoc ſolum veniebant, ut integris idolis ipſi perimerentur. Nam ſinguli quique valentiſſimi juvenes cultores idolorum, qui quot occideret, ipſis idolis vovere conſueverant. Quidam

etiam

But the most strenuous opposer both of their principles and behaviour was the famous Bishop of Hippo; whose writings against them, joined to his personal influence and authority, contributed highly to their discredit and downfall. Augustin in an epistle to Dulcitius (Ep. cciv.) desires that tribune to correct the Donatists by an edict, but not to kill them, because it was doing the very thing so many of them wished. "Led on (says he in different parts of this letter) by a wretched principle of fury and ingratitude towards God and man, they think to strike a terror into us by their own destruction. Yet the obstinacy and madness of a few men ought not to impede the salvation of numbers. They think we are afraid lest they should perish. But we see that many have returned into the way of peace through an opportunity given them. Can we then, ought we, to desist from this method, because some of their party, most severe and cruel to themselves, will destroy themselves not according to our, but their own, will and pleasure. The church grieves for such as perish in this manner, as David grieved for his rebellious son Absalom. But we have demonstrated in a number of disputations and writings, that they cannot die the death of martyrs, who have not lived the life of Christians; since it is not the punishment, but the cause, that makes the martyr. But concerning those most furious deaths, which some of the Donatists inflict on themselves, by which they render themselves abominable and detestable to many even of their own people, whose minds are not possessed with such a madness, we have often answered on the grounds of scripture and reason—" "how can he, who is perfidious to himself, be good to any one?"

etiam se trucidandos armatis viatoribus ingerebant, percussuros eos se, nisi ab iis perimerentur, terribiliter comminantes. Nonnunquam & a iudicibus transeuntibus extorquebant violenter, ut a carnificibus vel ab officio ferirentur. Unde quidam illos sic illulisse perhibetur, ut eos tanquam percutiendos ligari & dimitti juberet, atque ita eorum impetum incruentus & illæsus evaderet. Jam verò per abrupta præcipitia, per aquas & flammæ occidere seipsos "quotidianus illis ludus fuit." Hæc enim eos tria genera mortis Diabolus docuit, ut mori volentes, quando non inveniebant, quem terrent, ut ejus gladio ferirentur, per saxa se mitterent, aut ignibus gurgitibusque donarent. Quis autem illos hæc docuisse credendus est, possidens eorum cor, nisi ille qui & Salvatori nostro, ut se de pinnâ templi præcipitaret, tanquam de lege suggestit? Cujus suggestionem a se utique prohiberent, si magistrum Christum in corde portarent. Sed quia in se Diabolo potius dederunt locum, aut sic pereunt quemadmodum ille grex porcorum, quem de monte in mare turba dæmonum dejecit; aut illis mortibus erepti, & pio Matris Catholice gremio collecti, ita liberantur, quemadmodum est a domino liberatus, quem pater ejus a dæmonio sanandum obtulit, dicens quod aliquando cadere in aquam, aliquando in ignem soleret, &c.

But

But there was another crown, in which the female Christians were concerned, and which they laboured more zealously to obtain even than that of martyrdom:—this was the crown of virginity, on which so high a value was set in the early ages of Christianity. However concerning the true nature of this crown, some of the fathers, as well as those of the weaker sex themselves, seem to have formed an erroneous judgment, when they imagined, that the outward pollution of the body deprived the involuntary sufferer of all the rewards of her internal purity and chastity. Wherefore as in the early ages of the church, the holy virgins were exposed to great hazards of violence; not only at a time of general persecution, but also from the brutality and lust of barbarous nations, who were continually making inroads on the Roman territories, many were inclined to preserve their chastity at the expence of their lives; and thus to commit extreme violence on their own persons, for fear of suffering indignities from others:—this was to burn the temple lest it should be profaned. Eusebius and other ecclesiastical writers mention many christian women, who put themselves to violent deaths by drowning, leaping from precipices, or other ways, when the confusion and trouble of the times threatened them with violation; concerning whose voluntary suicide some of the fathers speak with great tenderness, if not with a degree of approbation; and many of these virgin-suicides were admitted into the calendar of saints.

But amid the many instances of this sort the voluntary self-sacrifice of Pelagia at the shrine of her own chastity seems to have arrested the chief attention of the fathers, who dwell on the circumstances of her death with much energy and compassion. “She was prepared (says Chrysostom [L]) at the age of fifteen years to endure tortures and every kind of pain; but she feared to lose the crown of virginity, to preserve which she destroyed herself. Hence it was perceivable, that the lust of tormentors and hangmen struck a greater dread into the soul of Pelagia than all their instruments of torture; and from the power of which lust she was determined to snatch herself. She aimed both at the crown of martyrdom and the crown of virginity; but there being so great an hazard of losing the latter, she had “just cause” to prevent so great an injury to herself by a previous, voluntary death.” We see how handsomely Chrysostom speaks of this lady’s suicide, who was fainting after her

[L] See his homily in praise of the virgin-martyr Pelagia.

death.

death [M].—Ambrose also (who was an enthusiast for virginity) bestows the highest encomiums on this action [N] of Pelagia and zealously commends through her the behaviour of those women, who killed themselves to avoid the hazard of violation.—Jerom likewise, who countenanced the most exalted notions of virginity, excepts the case of preserving chastity from his general censure of suicide. “It is not our duty (says he) to rush on death but only to “submit to it contentedly, when brought on us by others. Whence even in “times of persecution [O], it is not lawful to die by our own hands,—“except “when chastity is in danger,”—but to submit our necks to the executioner.”

But the ancient father, who has written most fully on this subject is [P] Augustin; who considers the case of these female suicides as worthy of com-

[M] But though Chrysostom makes this allowance in favour of Pelagia's action, yet he speaks warmly against all suicide in another place, viz. in his Comm. on Galatians, C. i. 4. He is arguing against those, who called the world itself evil. “When you hear it said, that the world is evil, understand it (says he) of the wicked actions and corrupt purposes of the mind. For Christ did not “come to drive us from this life, but to effect, that while we remained in it, we should make ourselves worthy to be transferred to heaven. But if you do not admit this interpretation, but do yet “affirm, that this life is an evil one, you cannot charge those with criminality, who by self-murder “deliver themselves from it. For since those, who withdraw themselves from what is evil, do not “deserve reprehension, but reward; so those, who break through the fetters of life, cannot according “to your opinion (of its being an evil world in itself) be worthy of censure. But God punishes “suicides more severely than murderers, and we ourselves all deservedly reprobate and detest them. “For if it be not lawful to kill others, it is a much greater crime to kill oneself. But if life were an “evil in itself, murderers would be worthy of being crowned with honour, as delivering us from what “is wicked.”

[N] Ambrose is very declamatory and enthusiastic in his account of Pelagia's drowning herself with her mother and sisters, as any one may read, who thinks it worth the trouble of consulting his work *De Virginibus*, Book III. towards end.

[O] Jerom's remark on the sentence, *Tollite me & mittite in mare*—Jonæ, Cap. i. is as follows. *Non est enim nostrum mortem arripere, sed illatam ab aliis libenter accipere. Unde & in persecutionibus non licet propria perire manu, “Absque eo ubi castitas periclitatur,”—sed percutienti colla submittere.* N. B. Some have been willing to force the interpretation of “*absque eo*,” &c. to signify—“No, not even when chastity is in danger; and others have extended the sense, so as to mean, “all “purity of life and manners:”—but there seems little doubt of the true interpretation lying between both; viz. that Jerom being so great a patron of virginity (see his Books *adversus Jovinianum*) meant to except the case of preserving female chastity, and that alone, from censure in suicide.

See also Part VI. C. i. on Donne concerning this passage in Jerom.

[P] Augustin died An. Dom. 430. Chrysostom, Ambrose and Jerom some few years before him.

passion,

passion, though he allows no sort of necessity for their committing such violence on themselves. His famous work "Concerning the City of God" was composed after the taking of Rome by Alaric, king of the Goths; and, as many Christians of both sexes (particularly of the female) had put themselves to death, to avoid the lust and cruelty, which they dreaded from these barbarous conquerors, Augustin expatiates somewhat largely on the guilt of suicide; and that even under these circumstances the action must be deserving of censure, though not without a mixture of pity and compassion for the mistaken zeal of [Q.] its perpetrators. The substance of what Augustin advances on this point is as follows. "That since the power, by which every person leads an honest and good life is established and enthroned in his own will alone, the body can neither be really sanctified nor polluted but by the intervention of the will; and consequently whatever is endured involuntarily and of necessity, tends not to the pollution of inward or real purity. But though every one is liable to suffer without fault or blame, whatever superior strength and power chooses to impose, yet in regard to the violation of chastity, female sensibility is so delicate and exquisite, as to apply a sense of shame to itself, in what is ever so involuntarily endured. Now who can choose (says this writer) but pity such virgins, as have voluntarily destroyed themselves to avoid this seeming shame? And yet he that can impute it as a fault to others, who, fearing to incur their own condemnation in order to avoid another's villainy, did not first destroy [R] themselves, must himself deserve the charge of great folly. For if it be not

[Q.] The enemies of Christianity had raised an objection against it; for that the heathen gods had filled the Roman empire with slaughter and devastation, on finding their temples deserted, since the progress of Christianity. To refute this objection Augustin composed his famous work, "De Civitate Dei," soon after the taking of Rome by Alaric, An. Dom. 410; to justify the Providence of God in the demolition of the Roman power.—Though the Goths on taking Rome paid a particular respect (as history informs us) to the possessions of Christian churches in Rome, which were preserved from pillage; yet the persons of the citizens (especially those of the weaker sex) could not but be exposed to outrage and violence; which caused many to destroy themselves, in order to preserve themselves pure and undefiled. It afterwards became a question, whether the virgins and other Christians had done right in killing themselves to avoid pollution?—This Augustin discusses in several chapters of his first Book, De Civitate Dei.

[R.] Ac per hoc & quæ mulieres se occiderunt, ne quidquam hujusmodi paterentur, quis humanos affectus iis nolit ignosci? Et quæ se occidere noluerunt, ne suo facinore alienum flagitium devitarent, quisquis iis hoc crimine dederit, ipse crimine insipientiæ non carebit.—AUGUSTIN De Civ. Dei, L. I.

"lawful

“ lawful for a private person to kill another man (however guilty he may know
 “ him to be) unless he be authorised in some special manner by the law to do
 “ it; then he, who kills himself, must also be a man-slayer in the eye of the
 “ law; and the more innocent the self-murderer was of every crime, the less
 “ reason there was for his committing such an action, and consequently the
 “ greater was his guilt in [s] so doing. For why should a man, who has done
 “ no evil to another, do to himself the greatest of evils—that of murdering
 “ himself, only lest another person should do him a less injury? why should he
 “ thus commit sin himself, for fear another should commit it? But the fear is
 “ (especially as relating to women) of being polluted by brutal lust. Yet how
 “ can another’s lust pollute thee not consenting to it? Chastity is a virtue of
 “ the mind; how then can it be really lost by any thing that may happen,
 “ when the body is in captivity to the will and superior force of another? So on
 “ the other hand, the mind being impure in its desires, how is true chastity
 “ preserved even in an inviolated body? If then, even after involuntary violation,
 “ there can be no sufficient grounds for murdering oneself, under the idea of a
 “ stain contracted, how much less room can there be to do it beforehand, under
 “ the uncertainty and fear alone, that another (not we ourselves) may do what
 “ is evil?—It is never allowed, much less commanded, in canonical scripture,
 “ that we should destroy ourselves, either with a view of obtaining immortality
 “ or of avoiding calamity. But on the contrary it is commanded in the [T]
 “ law, “Thou shalt not kill;” namely, neither thyself nor any other; since
 “ he that kills himself, kills no other but a man. Though suicide has been
 “ deemed in many a mark of spirit or greatness of mind, yet if the matter be
 “ more accurately examined, there will be found more courage and intrepidity,
 “ as well as soundness of judgment, in enduring such misery and oppression as
 “ we cannot avoid than in thus flying its approach. That many brave and
 “ great men among the Heathens murdered themselves is not to be denied; but
 “ the question rests not on the act itself, but the right to commit it; and there-
 “ fore sound reasoning is in this case before all example. Now reason bids the
 “ Christian not be warped by the examples of the Heathens (who acted on such
 “ different principles) but consult the history and rule of his own faith. If

[s] This mode of arguing has been considered in another place and found defective.—See Part III. C. ii.

[T] See a full discussion of this commandment in Chap. on Christianity, Part III. C. i.

“ he do this he will find, that neither patriarch, prophet, nor [u] apottle, ever
 “ flew to this method of deliverance from affliction and trouble;—that our
 “ Saviour advised his disciples to fly from city to city in the times of persecution,
 “ but not to deliver themselves by the short and easy (if it had but been inno-
 “ cent) method of suicide;—that no particular mansions of blifs are allotted to
 “ such, as should compass their deaths in this hasty manner, but that on the
 “ contrary the Christian is made perfect in suffering. This being the case,
 “ whatever notions the Heathens might entertain of the greatness or magna-
 “ nimity of the action; and however they might celebrate the praises of their
 “ Lucretia or Cato, yet it is plainly an unlawful action on any occasion in a
 “ Christian; who, if he must look toward heathen examples, will find much
 “ more to commend and imitate in the steady perseverance of a Regulus through
 “ the paths of misery and torture, than in the hasty injustice of a Lucretia
 “ punishing her own innocence, or in the stoical pride and self-importance of
 “ an expiring Cato. But it is a dangerous error that has crept into some
 “ people’s minds, that a person may kill himself, because either his enemy has
 “ injured him or means to do so. This is for a man to avoid one crime, which
 “ it is probable may be committed by another person, by certainly committing
 “ as great or a greater himself. But says an objector, “ what if there should
 “ be danger of my consent to the crime myself hereafter, and thus participating
 “ of the guilt, ought I not rather to make sure of my innocence by first putting
 “ an end to my life, in order to escape the hazard of temptation?” This is to
 “ commit certain murder, for fear only of being tempted to participate in some
 “ crime hereafter, which may or may not be equal in magnitude to murder;
 “ this is to commit a sin, which from its nature can admit of no repentance, for
 “ fear of committing one some time or other, which might admit of sorrow and
 “ contrition. But if it be ever lawful to fly from the danger of a future sin by a
 “ voluntary death, then would it not only be lawful, but highly prudent and
 “ expedient to do it immediately after baptism (“ he must mean of adults”)
 “ when by the font of regeneration we have been completely purified from all
 “ sin: this is the moment to be embraced to avoid all danger of sinning in
 “ future. But whosoever will maintain, that any or every man may do this at
 “ that time, I will maintain, that he is both a dotard and a madman. Yet if

[u] See more of this in Chap. on Christianity, Part III. C. i. where the Latin of this passage is quoted in a note.

“ he may not do it at that time, which would be so effectual to avoid “ all
 “ sin, still less may he do it at any other, to avoid any “ particular” sin. But
 “ in reply to all this it is observed, “ that holy church sanctifies and honours
 “ with pious memorials, the martyrdoms of many virgins and women, who
 “ took various methods of destroying themselves, in order to avoid the brutal
 “ lust of their persecutors and conquerors; the church therefore in their persons
 “ encourages and honours suicide.”—Of such (Augustin replies) I dare affirm
 “ nothing rashly. Perhaps the church had sufficient testimony, that it was the
 “ divine will, that the memories of these saints should be honoured; I cannot
 “ tell—it may be that it has. If God command even to kill ourselves, we must
 “ obey; only it is to be clearly marked, that this divine [x] command be in-
 “ volved in no degree of uncertainty. But this we say, this we affirm, this we
 “ universally maintain, that no one ought to bring a voluntary death upon
 “ himself for the sake of flying from temporal sufferings, lest he fall into
 “ eternal ones; that no one ought to do it for fear of another person’s sin,
 “ lest he fall into a more grievous one of his own, whom another’s could not
 “ have polluted; that no one ought to do it on account of his own past sins,
 “ for which he should rather wish to live, that he may have time to heal the
 “ diseases of his soul by repentance; that no one ought to do it through eager-
 “ ness of obtaining a better life, since a better life will not befall those after
 “ death, who have been guilty [v] of their own murder.”

Such was the nature of that religious suicide, which prevailed among some Christians in the early ages of the church, and such were the opinions of the

[x] Augustin speaks here very tenderly of the decisions of the church upon these kinds of suicides; whose action he approves not, and only thinks it can be justified by some extraordinary instinct or inspiration of God (as he does Samson’s also). What he says here is plainly in deference to the decisions of the church respecting Pelagia and other female suicides, of whom the church has made saints. His own private opinion of the matter seems decided against countenancing (though not against compassionating) the case of these zealous women.

[v] Hoc dicimus, hoc asserimus, hoc modis omnibus approbamus, neminem spontaneam mortem sibi inferre debere veluti fugiendo molestias temporales, ne incidat in perpetuas; neminem propter aliena peccata, ne hoc ipse incipiat habere gravissimum proprium, quem non polluebat alienum; neminem propter sua peccata præterita, propter quæ magis hæc vitæ opus est, ut possint pœnitendo sanari; neminem velut desiderio vitæ melioris, quæ post mortem vitæ non suscipit. — AUGUSTINUS De Civitate Dei, Lib. I.

fathers concerning its commission. But as its practice could only rest on the mistaken zeal and enthusiasm of certain individuals, its general propriety could never be formed into a point of [z] controversy, and consequently no councils could be called, or canons made, to censure it as an article of heresy: it could only be reprobated in them (as occasion required) as an acknowledged sin, and have a peculiar punishment assigned to its commission.

It was a custom in the early ages of the christian church for offerings to be made at the altar according to the abilities and rank of the donor; and the names of those, who had contributed either in their life-time or at their decease, were publicly commemorated in prayers and masses. But the church had excluded with great propriety the reception of such oblations from various sorts of offenders, as a just reprobation of their crimes; and also to show, that while such objects of censure lived in an unrepenting state, they were not fit to be admitted into communion with the church. It appears that suicides or "Biathanati" (as they were then called) were constantly ranked among these great offenders; and with them those also, who were killed in the actual commission of any great crime. These latter were included on the plea, that such persons were in effect no better than murderers of themselves, because they brought their deaths immediately on themselves. But in process of time a relaxation was made respecting these, which could only be grounded on a charitable supposition, that had they not been cut off in actual commission, they might have lived to repent; and that to compass their own deaths was not their immediate point in view.

Yet the rejection of any oblation was to continue in full force against the immediate assassin of himself, as appears from a canon made in the second council of Orleans, which appoints, "that the oblations of those, who were killed in the commission of any crime, may be received, except of such as laid violent [A] hands on themselves." This censure is extended by the council held at Bracara or Braga, to the refusal of the usual rites of christian burial; since in

[z] See the use Donne would make of suicide's not being condemned as an article of heresy, in Part VI. C. i.

[A] Concilium Aurelianense secundum An. Christi 533. Canon XV. De Oblationibus Interfectorum. See Collectio Maxima Conciliorum, Fol. Vol. IV.

the sixteenth canon relative to discipline it is appointed, "that no commemoration should be made in the oblation (or eucharist) for such as destroyed themselves; neither should their bodies be carried out to burial with psalms, nor have the usual service said [B] over them."—The synod held at Auxerre forbids in its seventeenth constitution or canon "ever to receive the offerings of those, who had procured their own voluntary deaths by any [c] means." The Capitulars of Charlemagne and his son Lewis the Pious, which were compiled about the beginning of the ninth century, ordain in the following manner. "It is adjudged concerning any one, who kills or hangs himself, that if any one interesting himself in the cause of the self-murderer, or sympathising with him, wishes to bestow alms in behalf of his soul, let him do so, and let him use the prayers and psalms accordingly; but let the murderers of themselves be deprived of the benefits of oblations and masses. Because the judgments of God are incomprehensible, and no one can fathom the depths [D] of his counsels."—The Bulgarians being converted to Christianity in the ninth century, sent a number of questions to Pope Nicholas the First, on points of ecclesiastical discipline; of which the ninety-eighth concerned self-murderers, and was thus answered by Nicholas. "Ye ask, whether he is to be buried, who has murdered himself, or whether the sacrifice (of the mass) is to be offered for him? I answer thus. His body is to be buried, that it may not become offensive to others; but it is not to be carried out to burial with the accustomed funeral obsequies;—that thus an horror of the deed may be impressed on others. But if there be any, who impelled by humanity are willing to pay any regard to his sepulture, let them do it to indulge their own feelings, not out of respect to the self-murderer. But no sacrifice is to be offered for him, who not only hath sinned even unto death, but hath invited that death on himself. For who more accomplishes that sin unto

[B] Concilium Bracarense, An. Christi 563. De Disciplinâ. Canon XVI.—See Coll. Maxima Concil. Vol. V.

[C] Concilium Antifiodorense. Synodus An. Christi 578. "De iis, qui sibi mortem consciscunt." Canon XVII.—See Coll. Max. Concil. Vol. V.

[D] De eo, qui semetipsum occidit vel laqueo se suspendit, consideratum est, ut si quis compatiens velit eleemosynam dare, tribuat, & orationes in psalmodiis faciat. Oblationibus tamen & missis ipsi careant. Quia incomprehensibilia sunt judicia Dei & profunditatem consilii ejus nemo potest investigare.—Capitularium Caroli Magni & Pii Ludovici Imp. in Capitularibus Regum Francorum, L. VI. c. lxx.

“ death, for which the Apostle says, we are not to pray, than he, who imitating
 “ Judas, at the instigation of the Devil, becomes his [E] own murderer?”

Such then was the nature of the ecclesiastical censures past in different councils against suicide;—the offenders were denied the rites of christian burial, and masses could not be repeated for the supposed benefit of their souls. However it does not seem determined by the church in those days, that suicide (on account of its necessary want of repentance) certainly excluded from all possibility of salvation. It was not positively asserted in the public councils, that such must be the wretched case of every suicide; nay it was even permitted to the friends of the deceased, to say prayers and offer alms on his behalf. The acceptance only of public oblations in the name of the party himself, the performance of all religious ceremonies over the dead body, and the celebration of masses for the supposed comfort of his soul, these were refused in order to exhibit a just and public abhorrence of the crime: after this the suicide was left to the judgment of God, “ whose [F] decrees are confessed to be incomprehensible, “ and that no one can fathom the depth of his counsels.” By the addition of these expressions to some of their canons concerning suicide, it may be charitably supposed, that the framers of these canons did not mean to include under one general head of necessary damnation every perpetrator of suicide from what cause soever. Some exceptions must have been allowed, or they could not have enrolled, as they did, the names of many female suicides in the calendar of their saints. Indeed it plainly appears, that the absolute irremissibility of the sin of suicide, which has been maintained by some rigid casuists from the impossibility

[E] See Responsum xcviii. (De eo, qui se ipsum occidit) Nicolai Primi Papæ ad Consulta Bulgarorum.—See Coll. Max. Concil. Vol. VIII. p. 549. N. B. He was Pope from An. Christi 867 to 872.

[F] See this matter expressed in the Penitential of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, quoted in the beginning of the following Chapter.

Taylor (see Ductor Dubitantium, B. III. c. ii.) speaking of the Capitulars in which these expressions are used, says; “ It was prudent and charitable which was decreed by the French Capitulars. It was “ more gentle than that of Virgil—Proxima deinde, &c. The poet appointed a sad place in hell for “ those, who threw away their souls; but he knew nothing of it, neither do I; but only that it is not “ lawful. But how they shall fare in the other world, who upon great accounts are tempted to com-
 “ mit suicide, is one of God’s secrets, which the great day will manifest.”

of repentance, was not the doctrine contained in the ancient canons. The framers of these behaved with greater humility. Contented to brand the crime with all possible infamy here by way of prevention, they left the final determination of the self-murderer's case—his eternal doom—to the inscrutable [c] judgments of God.

Christian burial with the usual solemnities, though a matter of no [H] real consequence to the deceased, (since it may be bestowed in all its pomp and pageantry on the most flagitious character, and omitted through accident or necessity in its most simple form towards the most deserving) has yet always been considered by the living, as a privilege of which they would not willingly be deprived; especially since its public refusal implies a severe censure on the character of the deceased. Its denial in the case of suicide was designed to cast a severe reproach on its perpetrator; and the consequence of that denial seems originally to have involved the casting out of the body, as a prey to birds and beasts, and its exposure to decay and putrefaction above ground. But this part of the indignity was gradually omitted and permission given to put the body under ground without the performance of any funeral obsequies, for the reason given above by Pope Nicholas, "left it should be offensive to the living." But as the usual solemnities were denied, other ceremonies took place at the inhu-

[c] "Christian writers (says Jortin, Vol. V. Serm. vii.) have agreed in condemning self-murder; and some have looked upon it, as upon an unpardonable sin, "because (say they) in this case there is "usually no room for repentance, and therefore none for divine mercy."—I would not warrant the justness of this inference. One would rather be inclined to think, that it is not a single action, though the last action, and a bad one, that must determine a man's future state, but rather the whole of his conduct, as the good or evil of it shall predominate."

"God forbid that I should pronounce a final and peremptory sentence upon all those unfortunate persons, who have died by their own hands. We know not what allowance God may make for some men's opinion of the lawfulness of it, and for the distraction of other men's thoughts and passions, through a settled melancholy, or some violent temptation: my business is not to limit the sovereign prerogative grace of God, but to declare the nature of the thing according to the terms of the Gospel. To murder ourselves, is the most unnatural murder: it is a damning sin, and such a sin as no man can repent of in this world; and therefore unless God forgive it without repentance, it can never be forgiven; and the Gospel of Christ gives us no commission to preach forgiveness of sin without repentance."—SHERLOCK on Death, p. 217.

[H] ————— *facilis jactura sepulchri est.* ———— VIRC. ÆD. II.

mation

mation of a suicide expressive of contempt and abhorrence of the crime: and in most European states the body is deposited either in some place set apart for the burial of extraordinary criminals, or in some public highway, to be trodden under foot by every traveller, after having undergone many previous marks of disgrace and infamy. Thus far the punishment of suicide proceeded (by way of terror to the living) on religious grounds, being considered, as it was highly fitting it should, as an offence against God and the precepts of christianity; and every society of Christians has an undoubted right either to confer her solemn services on the individuals of her establishment, or to withhold them, according as it judges them to be worthy or unworthy of their participation.

But the state likewise justly conceiving itself aggrieved, and its wholesome laws and institutions infringed and violated by this desertion of a citizen from all his social and relative duties; and perhaps moreover from that public punishment, which his declared offences might have been just on the point of inflicting on him,—the state follows the idea of Roman jurisprudence, and lays hold on the offender in that part of himself, which alone remains in its power—his property. Hence in many countries of Europe the property of a suicide is by law alienated from its natural channel of its inheritance and becomes vested in the magistrate or state. But whereas Roman law, regarding suicide only in a political and not in a moral or religious light, enjoined the forfeiture of possessions only in particular cases of suicide, (viz. where the public treasury would otherwise have been defrauded by this secession of the citizen) the laws of christian communities, condemning at the same time its immorality and irreligion, makes this forfeiture [1] general in all cases of suicide (insanity alone excepted) for example's sake, and the more effectually to deter others from its commission. Whether this be a wise and salutary measure is not to be discussed [κ] in this

[1] Prædicta omnia (about forfeitures by civil law in cases of suicide) locum habent secundum juris communis constitutionem; de consuetudine autem contrarium servatur. Nam ex quacunque causâ quis se interfecerit, sive tædio vitæ, sive ex impatientiâ doloris, sive metu criminis, sive aliâ ratione; corpus in sterquilinio cum canibus communem sepulturam habet. gl. in c. placuit 33. quæst. 5. vel quod ex consuetudine magis usitatum est, furcâ suspenditur & bona confiscantur.—ELBERTI LEONINI Processus criminalis. Ed. 1604. 4to. Ad Tit. L. "De bonis eorum qui mortem sibi consciscunt:"—ubi fusè recenset de talium poenâ.

[κ] See its ample discussion in the next Chapter.

place. It is only mentioned here, as an usual part of the punishment of suicide in modern days; and which prevails in particular in our own country, whose laws and customs on this point shall be considered in the following Chapter [L].

[L] The old French law against suicide is as follows. "The bodies of suicides are to be dragged on hurdles to a place of exposure, there to be hung up by the feet; and their goods to be confiscated." But later French lawyers say, "that according to the new system of jurisprudence, the confiscation of goods hath no longer place." Indeed the whole French law seems gone into disuse; since the bodies of suicides are no longer dragged on hurdles, but privately interred; the process being easily managed by order of the proper magistrate.

Donne says (Biath. Part II. Dist. iii. S. 1.) "that the Flemish laws only allow confiscation of goods in five cases, of which suicide is one. He remarks on the cruelty of this decision, in ranking it with such foul crimes as treason, heresy, sedition, and forsaking the army against the Turk, which are the other four cases."

The following is extracted from Umfreville's *Lex Coronatoria*, or Office and Duty of Coroners. Printed 1761. 2 vol. 8vo. Part I. C. i.—"A difference is made in civil law in cases of Felonia de se. Where a man is called in question on account of any capital crime and kills himself to prevent the law, the same judgment is given in all points of forfeiture, as if he had been attainted in his life-time; and on the contrary, when a man killeth himself upon any impatience or infirmity of body or sickness, the civil law does not punish it at all.—The body is drawn out of the house, wherein the person killed himself, with ropes; not by the door, for of that he is unworthy, but through some hole or pit made under the threshold of the door; and is thence drawn by an horse to the place of punishment or shame, where it is hanged on a gibbet; and none may take it down, but by order of the magistrate, or wear mourning for the offender. And this is still practised abroad; and I have heard a Dantzic trader give an instance in his own observation, that about twelve months since when he was there, a person suspected, but not criminally charged of theft, hanged himself in his chamber against a window-frame; and an inquest found him *felo de se*. Upon which the window-frame was taken down and burned, and the body not suffered to be brought through the house, but was conveyed through the void of the window, and let down by pulleys to the ground, where it was laid upon a sledge and drawn by horses to the common place of execution, where it was hung up on a high gibbet and remained so when he came away, which was the week following."

The author has been favoured with the following particulars relative to the punishment of suicide in Geneva, in a letter from one of the first citizens and magistrates of that republic.—"In the last century the bodies of those, who killed themselves, were dragged on an hurdle; but it has not been practised of late years. It was only a custom, there is no law for it. The suppression of this indignity on the body was occasioned by the following circumstance, which happened about fifty years ago in Geneva. A man, who lived alone in a house, was found one morning hanging in his room, with a stool overturned under his feet. There was every appearance of self-murder. The doors were also shut and there were no marks of thieves. The body was therefore dragged on an hurdle through the streets, and all the usual ignominies were practised upon it. But sometime afterwards two thieves

were

were apprehended, who avowed their murder of this man, and their having purposely placed him in that suspicious posture. The magistrates, struck with having disgraced the memory and afflicted the family of an innocent man, have never since enforced the custom of dragging on an hurdle.—But though this part of the ignominy is omitted, yet suicides are not buried with the same solemnities, as those who die a natural death. The custom is, after a man has been declared a self-murderer, for the Syndics or Presidents of the Council to order, that he shall be quickly interred, and also in the morning (other funerals are in the evening) without the least funeral ceremony.—When the suicide is not so clearly ascertained, or the magistrates wish to be as secret as possible, nobody makes any opposition to parents or those in the same house following the corpse; but the relations are not suffered to send to the houses of friends (as is otherwise usual) to join in the funeral procession.—There exists in the republic only one written law against suicide, which is as follows. “The goods of the person, who “has voluntarily precipitated, drowned, hung, or killed himself by any means, being in his right senses, “are to be confiscated for the benefit of the republic. But if he have any children, they must have “that portion, to which every child is entitled by law, of his father’s inheritance, and of which no “parent can deprive his child.”—In common cases of death, a certain portion is also due to other relations, as parents, brothers, sisters; but all these lose their portion in the case of suicide. However this law of confiscation has not been enforced for many years.”

The laws of Savoy for punishing suicide are much the same as those of Geneva, but more strictly enforced.

C H A P. II.

Division of English Law into Lex scripta and non scripta.—Ecclesiastical censures of suicide in refusal of christian burial.—Council of Hereford.—Theodore’s Penitential.—Egbert’s Penitential.—Canons of King Edgar.—Rubric in the Book of Common Prayer.—Confiscation of property in cases of self-murder probably introduced into England among Danish customs.—Extracts from ancient and modern lawyers concerning the punishment of suicide in England.—General grounds of the mode of its punishment.—Felo de se a most ignominious term.—Legal process against suicide.—Coroner and his Jury.—The verdict must be lunacy or felo de se.—The former frees from all legal penalties; the latter incurs—First, refusal of christian burial.—Men regardful of funeral honours and a good name after death.—The refusal of these intended to act as an intimidation.—The law only requires burial in some public highway.—Secondly, confiscation of property.—Reasons and grounds for this.

WHEN the great legislator of Athens was asked, why he had appointed no punishment by law for one, who should kill his parent, his answer was; "because he did not suppose, that any one could be capable of committing so great a crime; and therefore to set about prohibiting it by law, would be only to put men in mind of the possibility [M] of its commission." Fortunate would it be for our island, were there as little necessity of adverting to the crime of suicide in it, as there was to that of parricide at Athens in the days of Solon; and in consequence, as little occasion to declare an abhorrence of it or to specify its punishment. However as the case is far otherwise, we will now proceed to a review of what has been appointed by law or custom concerning suicide in this kingdom.

The laws and customs of England are as mixed as its language [N]. But they are usually divided into "*Lex non scripta*"—the unwritten or common law; and "*Lex scripta*"—the written or statute-law [O]. Now the former (as Blackstone observes) with us "are not merely oral or traditional, but their monuments or evidences are contained in the records of courts of justice, in books of reports and judicial decisions, and in the treatises of learned sages, handed down from high antiquity." The punishment of suicide in England is of a mixed nature, being grounded partly on statute-law and partly on the authority of long established customs founded on old canons, old laws and constitutions. These shall now be traced, as far as the author has had opportunity of developing the subject.

[M] Cum Solon interrogaretur, cur nullum supplicium constituisset in eum, qui parentem necasset, respondit, se id neminem facturum putasse. Sapienter fecisse dicitur, cum de eo nihil sanxerit, quod antea commissum non erat, ne non tam prohibere quam admonere videretur.—Cic. Orat. pro Sex. Roscio Amerino.

[N] "The laws of England have no dependence upon the civil law nor are governed by it, but are binding by their own authority. No stress or weight is to be laid on civil law, either for discovery or exposition of the laws of England further than by the customs of England or acts of parliament it is here admitted."—HALE's Hist. of the Pleas of the Crown, Fol. 1736. Part I. C. iii.

N. B. These customs are a mixture of those of the various nations by whom this island has been conquered.

[O] See Blackstone's Introduction to his Commentaries, Sect. 3.

In

In a council held at Hereford An. Dom. 673 under Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, it was determined, "that the ancient canonical decrees of the transmarine fathers should be observed [p] in England." By this determination the canon of the council of Orleans made An. Dom. 533 against receiving the oblations of suicides was established in England; and also that of Braga in the year 563, which forbids them christian [q] burial. But in order more fully to instruct the churches under his care, in what were the doctrines and decrees of transmarine councils, Theodore (who was Archbishop of Canterbury from the year 668 to 690) himself collected a "Penitential or Ritual" made up of canons taken from the councils of foreign churches. The tenth chapter of this Penitential concerns "those possessed by the devil, and those who kill themselves;" in which is the following passage [r]. "If any one be so tormented by the devil, as to run to and fro, scarce knowing what he does, and in that situation of mind should kill himself, it is proper to pray for such an one, provided he were previous to such possession a religious man. But if he kill himself through despair, through any timidity, or from causes unknown, let us leave this judgment to God, and not dare to pray (say mass) for such an one. It is not lawful to say mass for one, who hath voluntarily killed himself, but only to pray and bestow alms on his behalf. But some allow mass to be said for one, who impelled by a sudden temptation, seems to have murdered himself through an instantaneous distraction."

A rule or canon to the following purport appears in the [s] Penitential of Egbert, who was Archbishop of York from the year 734 to 766. "If any one kill himself by arms or other different methods by the instigation [t] of the devil, it is not lawful, that mass should be sung for such an one, or that his body should be committed to the ground with any psalmody (or burial-

[p] See Spelman's Councils, Vol. I. p. 152.

[q] See the last chapter for these canons.

[r] See Pœnitentiale Theodori Archiep. Cantuar. Cap. x. Paris Ed. 1677. 4to. — "De vexatis a Diabolo & de iis qui se occidunt."

[s] See Pœnitentiale D. Egberti Arch. Eboracenſis in Wilkins's Concil. Britan. Vol. I. p. 129.

[t] The distinction was great between one "vexatus a diabolo," who was deemed a madman, and one "instigatus a diabolo," who only yielded to wicked suggestions and temptations.

"service). Another canon is also to be found among the laws of our Saxon king Edgar, given in the year 967. "It is neither [u] lawful to celebrate mass for the soul of one, who by any diabolical instigation hath voluntarily committed murder on himself, nor to commit his body to the ground with hymns and psalmody or any rites of honourable sepulture."

Thus stood the ecclesiastical censures on suicide in England during the age of our Saxon princes: neither do we find any alteration made [x] in subsequent times. But after the Reformation, when the authority of ancient councils was so much weakened, still what in them respected a refusal of christian burial to the self-murderer was preserved and ratified by the rubric prefixed to the

[u] Canones dati sub Edgardo Rege 967. Canon XV. in Capite "De Modo imponendi Pœnitentiam."—See WILKINS's *Leges Anglo-Saxonice*, Fol. p. 90. or LAMBARD's *Archaionomia* five de præfatis Anglorum Legibus.

[x] The following paper appears in Oughton's *Ordo Judiciorum*, Vol. II. p. 300, from a manuscript. It bears no date; but shows that a special licence was necessary to bury the corpse of a suicide; and that such a licence was founded on the "supposed" repentance of the person, who lived a short time after he had cut his own throat. As the papers accompanying this bear date 1578, this licence was probably granted by John Aylmer, who was Bishop of London in Elizabeth's reign, from 1576 to 1584.

Licentia sepeliendi corpus cujusdam mortem sibi consciscientis.

"John by permission of God, Bishop of London, to all christian people to whom these presents shall come, greeting. Whereas Thomas Leach, Gent. late (while he lived) of the parish of St. Mildred in the Poultry, London, of our diocese and jurisdiction of London, did before his death lay violent hands on himself and cut his own throat with a knife, whereby he had and received such a mortal wound, that he died of that hurt; by reason whereof it might be doubted, whether he had such an interest in christian burial, as other persons of this realm have. Yet notwithstanding, forasmuch as it hath been testified before Sir Henry Martin, Knight, our Chancellor, that the said Thomas Leach falling into deep melancholy passions, whereof he languished six or seven months, was thereby many times distracted of his wits, and had no reason in those distractions to govern himself; and that heretofore before he fell into those distractions, he lived as an honest and religious Christian; and that after the wound he had received, he lived some little time, and when he could not speak, was found groaning and lifting up his hands, whereby it appeared, that he had an apprehension of, or was penitent for, the sin he had committed in laying violent hands on himself, and died a good Christian. And thereupon petition has been made to us, that leave and licence may be granted to bury the body of the said Thomas Leach, and our said Chancellor hath decreed the same to be granted. We therefore the Bishop aforesaid, for the reasons afore set down, so far as in us is, and by the law we can or may, have and do give and grant licence and leave, &c. In witness whereof, &c."

burial-

burial-service [y] in our present liturgy; which forbids that service to be used "for any that have laid violent hands on themselves." Now the Book of Common Prayer, with all the rites and ceremonies enjoined therein, having been established by the authority of Parliament, the refusal of christian burial to suicides became a part of our written or statute law.

It is now time to trace what can be found of the further punishment of this crime in the "lex non scripta," or common law of the land. Wilkins in his "Leges Anglo-Saxonica" has the following note subjoined to the canon established by Edgar concerning suicide, which has been mentioned above. "The punishment of suicide is no where found among the Saxon laws, except in the canons given by Edgar; and this is only an ecclesiastical punishment, which, as in other crimes, it would be penance, so here it is a prohibition from all honourable interment. But among the Danes a far different law

[y] This rubric was prefixed to the office of burial at the last review of the Common Prayer after the Restoration.—(See WHEATLEY on the Common Prayer.)

N. B. Wheatley in his review of this rubric doubts, whether even insane persons killing themselves ought to have this service read over them?—"because (says he) there is no exception made even in their favour." To which remark Umfreville (in his *Lex Coronatoria*, Part I. C. i.) thus replies. "I have heard of some clergymen, who from the general wording of the rubric (which, if it had been penned by the lawyers would probably have had the adverb "feloniously" inserted in it) have denied the whole or a part of the office to a lunatic (in whom there is no free act of the will) who has laid violent hands on himself; though by law he can commit no crime, not even treason, or incur any forfeiture. But this surely is not the intention of the rubric, or of the legislature which established it, however generally worded; and I should apprehend, that to imply the adverb would be but a commendable and necessary implication, and a distinction agreeable to the dictates of humanity and the sense of the law."—Burn in his *Ecclesiastical Law* (Vol. III. article, Suicide) writes to the following purpose. "By the rubric before the burial-office, persons, who have laid violent hands on themselves, shall not have that office used at their interment. And the reason thereof given by the canon law is, because they die in the commission of a mortal sin; and therefore this extendeth not to idiots, lunatics, or persons otherwise of insane minds, as children under the age of discretion or the like; so also not to those who do it involuntarily, as where a man kills himself by accident; for in such case it is not their crime, but their very great misfortune."—Wheatley is also very severe on coroners and their juries, and maintains, "that clergymen are to judge for themselves against whom the rubric is to be enforced:"—but in this he speaks without shadow of reason. The matter of inquiry rests solely with the coroner, and the verdict of his jury is the legal decision of the fact; agreeable to which verdict, whether it be lunacy or *felo de se*, the clergyman is bound to regulate his conduct, either in proceeding to or refusing christian burial.—See more of this matter in Burn's *Ecclesiastical Law*, Vol. I. Burial.

"obtains.

“ obtains. “ Let him, who hath murdered himself, be fined in all his goods
 “ to his lord; let him find a place of burial neither in the church nor church-
 “ yard; unless ill-health and madness drove him [z] to the perpetration.” It
 is probable therefore that the Danes might introduce the law of forfeiture into
 England among other of their laws and customs.

An ancient writer on the laws and customs of England, at the end of our
 third Henry's reign, mentions the political punishment of suicide to be by for-
 feiture of lands and chattels:—this is “ Bracton.” The substance of what he
 advances is as follows. “ A person, who murders himself, being accused of or
 “ caught in the commission of any heinous crime (for which if he had lived to
 “ be condemned, he would have forfeited every thing) shall have no heir;
 “ because the killing himself is equivalent to a confession or conviction of his
 “ guilt. But if a man kill himself when under no charge of a crime, he is
 “ allowed to have an heir; because as no felony was supposed to precede his
 “ death, there could be no presumptive conviction of criminality by his death.
 “ (That is, as appears from what follows, in the former case his lands shall be
 “ forfeited, in the latter not.) Yet he who kills himself through weariness of
 “ life, or impatience of pain and grief, shall forfeit all his moveables or personal
 “ estate, though he is permitted to have an heir to his lands or real estate.
 “ Moreover, if a person attempt to kill another and fail, and then through
 “ rage at his disappointment suddenly kill himself, he shall be punished and
 “ have no heir, (to his lands as well as goods) because he is to be considered
 “ as guilty of the felonious attempt of killing another; since he, who spares
 “ not himself, will never spare another, when in his power. But the madman,
 “ or the idiot, or the infant, or the person under such acute pain as to produce
 “ a temporary distraction, who kills himself, shall forfeit neither lands nor
 “ chattels; because he is deprived [A] of reason.” There seems here to be
 three distinct cases of suicide enumerated, with their penalties annexed; the
 first, of an offender against the state thus flying from punishment, who is to
 forfeit his whole property real and personal; the second, of a person not pre-
 viously accused of any felonious act, who is to forfeit only his moveables or

[z] See Wilkins's *Leges Saxonice*, p. 90. Folio.

[A] See Bracton “ *De Legibus & Consuetudinibus Angliæ*,” L; III. Tract. ii. C. 31.

“ personals;

personals; and the third, of an infant or an irrational person, who is to suffer no forfeiture or punishment at all. The first case, which is founded on the principles [B] of Imperial law, seems to have gradually fallen into disuse; probably owing to the extraordinary mildness of the English constitution, which will not suffer any man to condemn himself, or to be attainted, but by due and full process of law: the two latter continue in the same state to this day.

Britton [C], another famous lawyer, who was also an ecclesiastic and lived about the same time with Bracton, says, "In the case of one, who feloniously murders himself, his goods and chattels are to be confiscated like those of another felon; but his inheritance is to remain with his proper heirs." This writer distinguishes not the different cases of suicide with the precision of Bracton.

The following is nearly a transcript from Bracton by a lawyer in the reign [D] of Edward I. "But as any one may commit felony by killing another; so also by killing himself. If any one kill himself to avoid trial for any felony, his goods shall be confiscated to the treasury, nor shall he have any other heir besides his feudal lord. But if any one do it through a weariness of life or impatience of pain, his son shall be his heir, but his moveables shall be confiscated; and this shall be the case, wherever a previous felony was not committed. Infants, lunatics of any kind, destroying themselves shall neither lose inheritances nor chattels; and the wives of such shall receive their dowers."

[B] Justinian's Pandects were discovered in Italy about An. Dom. 1130. They were early and much studied in England; and though not received in a body, as our municipal law, (as they were in many European states) yet the usages of our ancient common law are much grounded on their principles.

[C] Britton was Bishop of Hereford, and very learned in Juribus Anglicanis. He died in 1275; and left behind him a work on the laws of England, written in Norman-French and entitled (says Matthew Paris) "Le Britoun." The above is to be found in Chap. vii. "De Aventure." Ed. 2. Printed 1640, by Wingate. Duod. Collected from ancient manuscripts.

[D] Fleta, seu Commentarius Juris Anglicani sic nuncupatus, sub Edvardo rege primo ab Anonymo conscriptus. Lib. I. C. xxxvi. "De Infortuniis."

Descending into more modern times, there appears little variation of the common law relative to suicide, except in regard to the forfeiture of land, which has been gradually discontinued. The fourteenth Dialogue of Fulbeck's *Parallel* [E] is "of Homicide;" of which self-murder forms a species. In this dialogue Codicognostes the civilian thus observes. "There is another kind of homicide, which is termed *homicidium sui ipsius*, when a man killeth himself; and such offenders are punished by our law (civil law) according to the quality of their mind, whereby they were moved. For if they kill themselves through grief or impatience of some infirmity, no punishment followeth their fact, but they are left to the tribunal of the Almighty Judge of the quick and dead. But if they kill themselves upon any other cause, their goods are confiscated, and their bodies, though they be dead, and so impassible and free from punishment, yet for the terror of them that live, they are thus ordered. The body is drawn out of the house, where the man did kill himself, with ropes, not by the door, but through some hole or pit made under the threshold of the door; because it is unworthy to be brought out the same way, which the man, whilst he lived, did use: and he is drawn by an horse to the place of punishment or shame, where he is hanged on a gibbet, and none may take the body down, but by the authority of the magistrate; and none may wear any mourning robe for such an offender. When a man of malice conceived doth kill himself, it is an impious homicide, because the power of life and death is God's, not ours; and therefore is not to be usurped by man; wherefore we have a very good rule—"Nemo membrorum suorum est dominus." The former part of the above is according to old Roman law, and the latter, though practised in foreign countries, is not in use in our own. It was moreover to be expected from the nature of this parallel or conference, that the other dialogists should have set forth the laws or customs of England concerning self-murder under their respective branches; but all further mention of the matter is contained in a short observation of Anglonophylax, the barrister—"that the homicide of himself by our law forfeits his goods."

[E] Fulbecke's *Parallele* or *Conference* of the civil law, the canon law, and the common law of this realme: wherein the agreement and disagreement of these laws are opened and discussed. Small 8vo. 1601.

N. B. The names of the supporters of the dialogue are Nomomathes, who desires the information; Canonologus, a canonist; Codicognostes, a civilian; and Anglonophylax, a barrister.

However

However the matter of the forfeiture of lands seems to have been a more doubtful point in the times succeeding Bracton and Britton; since "Cowel" (of late date indeed in comparison of them) writes as follows [F]. "He, who voluntarily procures his own death, is called by us a *felo de se*; and he has no successor in his chattels but the royal treasury. But it is doubted at this day by some, whether he also forfeits his lands? as to his chattels no one doubts." And in another place [G]. "But it is murder also, when any one compasses his own death. Such an one is called *felo de se*. In which case he is refused christian burial, and forfeits all his goods and chattels to the king to be distributed by his almoner to pious uses. Yet some think a distinction is to be made, whether a man lays violent hands on himself through fear of public trial, through weariness of life, or through the force of any disease? For in the first case they think he forfeits both his lands and chattels like other felons; in the second his chattels only; and in the third nothing at all."

But Coke in his Institutes [H], which were published not many years after Cowel's, speaks peremptorily of a suicide as forfeiting no lands in any case. "Felo de se (says he) is one, who being compos mentis, of sound memory and of the age of discretion, killeth himself; which being lawfully found by the oath of twelve men, all the goods and chattels of the party so offending are forfeited. A man attempting to kill another, and falling [I] by accident (so
" as

[F] Cowell Institutiones Juris Anglicani, Lib. II. Tit. xii. Sect. 4. Duod. 1630.

[G] Cowell Institutiones, Lib. IV. Tit. xviii. Sect. 16.

[H] Coke's Institutes, Part III. C. viii. "On Homicide." Printed 1644.

"It is a greater crime (says Coke also) to kill oneself than to kill another man."

[I] "This however is denied by some other lawyers, unless a man feloniously attacking another falls by chance on his own weapon (not the other person's) and thus is killed. "In some cases (say 3 Inst. 54. Dalton, C. 144. grounded on the wording of Knivett's opinion, 44 E. 3. 44. and 44 Aff. 17.) he who doth maliciously attempt to kill another, and in pursuance thereof doth accidentally kill himself, he is *felo de se* in construction of law; though originally he had no intent against his own life:—but this the great Hale opposes, and that "it is only an infortunium; unless the death had been from his own weapon and by his own act." Vide 1 Hale 413, a wise distinction there made and the books reconciled. Vide etiam L. L. H. 1. N° 88. apud Wilk. 276. "Si quis in defensione sua lanceum, vel gladium, vel arma quælibet contra hostem suum extendat, & ille dirâ cupiditate nocendi cæcatus irruat, sibi imputet, quicquid habeat"—Let him take what follows; and death thus

"as to die) on the weapon with which the other is defending himself, is felo de se. He forfeits no lands, because that can be done only by attainder. The law makes no diversity of cases in settling the forfeitures (as Bracton asserts). For felo de se, whatsoever offence he hath committed (whereof he was not in his life-time attainted) shall forfeit no lands, but his goods and chattels only." With submission however to so great an authority, it seems rather to have been the case; that in ancient time a forfeiture of lands, as well as goods, took place in certain cases of suicide on the grounds of Imperial and Danish law; which however, as the matter of attainder became more settled, gave place to humanity towards the innocent heirs at law, and fell gradually into disuse, whilst the forfeiture of personals alone remained. Greenwood, in describing the duty of a coroner when sitting over a dead body, makes it a part of his necessary charge to a jury to acquaint them—"You must know, that if one man wilfully kill another, or if a man kill or drown himself, the first

caused seems only an infortunium; but in no sort to imply the agent to be a felo de se, and though he came to his death by his own means, it was from the other's weapons."—UMFREVILLE'S *Lex Coronatoria*, Part I. C. i.

The passage in Hale referred to by Umfreville is as follows. "It is said, Co. P. C. p. 54. and by Mr. Dalton, Chap. 92. that if A gives B a stroke, that he falls to the ground, B draws his knife and holds it up for his own defence, A in haste falling upon B to kill him falls upon the knife, whereby he is wounded to death, A is felo de se; and for that they cite 44 E. 3. 44. 44 Ass. 17. where indeed it is adjudged, and that rightly, that B is not guilty, and shall not forfeit his goods, and it is not barely *fe defendendo*, for he did not strike, only held up his knife, and so is simply not guilty: and all that Knivett says is, *Est trové, que le mort occise lui mesme*, and adjudged that B is not guilty nor his goods forfeit: but Knivett says not, that A is felo de se, neither indeed is he, but it is only per infortunium. But if A had stricken at B with a knife intending to kill him, and missing B had stricken himself, and killed himself, there he had been felo de se, because that act, whereby he intended to murder B shall have the same construction, if it kill himself or any other person, as it should have done, if it had taken its effect upon B."—Hist. Plac. Coron. Part I. C. xxxi. Ed. 1736.

Hawkins also says—"Our laws have always had such an abhorrence of this crime, that not only he, who kills himself with a deliberate and direct purpose of so doing, but also in some cases he, who maliciously attempts to kill another, and in pursuance of such an attempt unwillingly kills himself, shall be adjudged in the eye of the law, a felo de se. For wherever death is caused by an act done with a murderous intent, it makes the offender a murderer; and therefore if A discharge a gun at B with an intent to kill him, and the gun bursts and kill A; or if A strike B to the ground, and then hastily falling upon him, wound himself with a knife, which B happens to have in his hand, and die,—in both these cases A is felo de se, for he is the only agent."—HAWKINS'S *Pleas of the Crown*, B. I. C. xxvii. Folio. 1716.

"doth

“ doth forfeit by that fact both his lands and goods, and the other forfeits
 “ goods and chattels, but [κ] no lands.” Hale also says; “ as touching the
 “ forfeiture of *felo de se*, he doth not forfeit his lands, nor his wife’s dower:
 “ but he forfeits his goods and chattels [L].”

Wood in his *Institutes* writes thus. “ A *felo de se* forfeits all his goods and
 “ chattels real and personal, which he hath in his own right, and all such
 “ chattels real, which he hath jointly with his wife or in her right; but not
 “ until it is lawfully found by the oath of twelve men before the coroner *super*
 “ *visum corporis*, that he is *felo de se*. He forfeits also bonds or things in
 “ action belonging solely to himself, and all entire chattels in possession, except
 “ in the case of merchants, where a moiety only of such joint chattels, as may
 “ be severed, is forfeited. He does not forfeit any lands of inheritance, for he
 “ was not attainted in his life-time; nor the goods and chattels which he pos-
 “ sessed, as executor or administrator, nor a guardianship in *focage* or by
 “ nature; because here he hath nothing of his own use.”—“ The whole is
 “ forfeited (says Hawkins) immediately after the inquisition is taken, from the
 “ time such mortal wound was given, and all immediate alienations [M] are
 “ avoided.”

These extracts shall be closed with one from Blackstone. “ A *felo de se* [N]
 “ is one that deliberately puts an end to his life, or commits any unlawful,
 “ malicious act, the consequence of which is his own death. As, if attempting
 “ to kill another, he runs upon his antagonist’s sword; or shooting at another,
 “ the gun bursts and kills himself. The party must be of years of discretion
 “ and in his senses, else it is no crime. But the law can only act (by way of
 “ punishment) upon what the suicide has left behind him, his reputation and
 “ his fortune; on the former, by an ignominious burial in the highway with a

[κ] See Greenwood’s *Bouleutherion*, or *Practical Demonstration of County Judicatures*. Printed 1659. Small 8vo.

[L] Hale’s *Hist. Placit. Coron.* Part I. C. xxxi.

[M] Wood’s *Institute of the Laws of England*, B. IV. C. v. printed 1722: and Hawkins’s *Pleas of the Crown*, B. I. C. xxvii. Folio. 1716.

[N] Blackstone’s *Commentaries*, Vol. IV. B. IV. C. xiv.

“ stake [o] driven through the body; on the latter, by a forfeiture of all his
 “ goods and chattels to the king. And it is observable, that this forfeiture
 “ has relation to the time of the act done in the felon’s life-time, which was
 “ the cause of his death. As if husband and wife be possessed jointly of a term
 “ of years in land, and the husband drowns himself, the land (that is, the
 “ lease of it) shall be forfeited to the king, and the wife shall not have it
 “ by [P] survivorship; which could not accrue till the instant of her husband’s
 “ death. And though it must be owned, that the letter of the law herein
 “ borders upon severity, yet it is some alleviation, that the power of mitigation
 “ is left in the breast of the sovereign.”

The punishment annexed to self-murder both by the common and statute law of this kingdom, having been stated, the grounds on which these penalties

[o] But with submission to this authority, the custom of driving a stake through the body is local, not general; and it makes no part of the coroner’s warrant for ignominious burial; which warrant shall appear hereafter.

[P] Sir Matthew Hale however seems somewhat to demur against this as a general case. “As to the relation of the forfeiture, (says he) Baron and Feme joint purchasers of a term for years, the husband drowns himself, the lease is forfeited, and the wife surviving shall not hold it against the king or almoner. *Plowden Com.* 260 b. *Dyer* 108. *Dame Hale’s case*, (wife of Sir James Hale, one of the Justices of the Common Pleas, who drowned himself in the third year of Elizabeth) in which all the judges agreed, but seemed to intimate different reasons. *Weston* held the relation was only to the death, but the title of the king and a common person coming together, the former shall be preferred: but yet they concluded, that the forfeiture relates to the first act, whereby the felony was committed, namely, the throwing himself into the water, and so the king’s title commenced in the life of the husband, and amounted to a forfeiture in his life-time, when by law it was in his power, either by his disposal or forfeiture as by outlawry, to bind the interest of the wife, and therefore they say, that if a villain give himself a mortal wound and the lord seize the goods, and then the villain die of the wound, the king shall have the goods against the lord; and with this agrees *Littleton*, 8 E. 4. 4.—That the law was well resolved “in that case” I do not doubt: but I am not satisfied, that the relation of the forfeiture is to the time of the stroke to all purposes, no more than in case of another felony; for suppose a man should give himself a mortal stroke and live eleven months after, how shall he support himself and family? But whereas in other cases of other felonies, the forfeiture as to the goods, relates neither to the stroke nor to the death, but to the conviction, here the forfeiture relates not barely to the presentment or inquisition, but to the death in case of a *felo de se*, for being his own executioner he prevents any formal conviction as in other felonies.”—*HALE’S Plac. Cor.* Part I. C. xxxi.

are inflicted shall now be ascertained.—Whenever a death is compassed neither by the visitation of God in sickness, by accident, lunacy, nor legal process, the state considers it as murder, and in consequence searches out the murderer in order to bring him to condign punishment. But in the case of self-murder, though the object of punishment has effectually evaded all personal sufferings by law, yet it does not follow that the legislature is therefore to cease from exerting such powers as remain. A grievous offence has been committed, even a murder of a peculiar nature, and whose “principle” is dangerous and destructive to every interest and happiness of society; and as such, it must not pass unnoticed or unpunished, in order to prevent, as far as may be, its future perpetration.

But the legislature can only attack a suicide in his “reputation” and in the disposal of his “property.” It is trusted (and not without reason) that by stigmatising a self-murderer’s reputation with every brand of infamy, the living may be worked into a sense of shame and horror of the crime; and by diverting his property from its natural channel, that every latent spark of humanity and attention to the interests of a family may be roused before the fatal blow is struck, which will instantly plunge that family into the depths of distress, of poverty and ruin. For which purpose the law begins with stamping not only a peculiar title on the crime of self-murder, but a title of peculiar shame and ignominy. Want and necessity may prompt a poor wretch to the commission of a common felony against others, and self-defence in an unlawful action may even urge any one against his real inclination or intention to murder another man; but to commit depredations on “oneself” is so unnatural an act,—to lay violent hands on oneself,—to stain them with one’s own blood, is such an outrage against all instinctive feeling, as must ever make us shudder at the name of a “felo de se.”

But this charge, being meant to imply the most serious consequences, is not to be rashly imputed to every one, who makes away with himself. For so tender is the law in general with regard to the life of a subject, that an officer is appointed to inquire into the cause of “every” violent, sudden or suspicious kind of death: and as the suicide’s death comes immediately under the descrip-
tion

tion of violence [Q], a coroner is or at least always ought to be called in to determine the matter. It is his business immediately to summon a jury of the neighbours, who are to inspect the dead [R] body, and to inquire into the cause of this sudden disaster. If it be proved to have happened by a man's own hand, the law is yet unwilling to suppose it could be the act of reason, and therefore with great humanity directs its inquiries into the state of mind of the suicide at the time of his sudden death. If insanity can be proved, the verdict "lunacy" is a sort of wretched consolation to the friends of the deceased: the body is admitted to christian burial, and the property flows in its natural [S]

[Q] The office of coroner is of great importance and high antiquity. It is of Saxon institution; and one of its great duties is to inquire into the cause of man's death, and that *super visum corporis*. He is not answerable for the verdict of his jury, but must take it, like other judges, even against his own private sentiments.

[R] The form of a coroner's warrant to summon a jury is as follows.—(See UMFREVILLE'S *Lex Cor.* Vol. II.)

"By virtue of my office—These are in his Majesty's name to charge and command you, that on sight hereof you summon and warn 24 able and sufficient men of your several parishes, personally to appear before me (at such a time and place specified) then and there to do and execute all such things that shall be given them in charge, on the behalf of our Sovereign Lord the King, touching the death of A. B. And for so doing this shall be your warrant:—signed and sealed by the coroner.—N. B. Out of these 24, 12 at least are sworn to make a jury; and the oath delivered to them by the coroner is as follows. "You shall diligently inquire and true presentment make, of all such matters and things, as shall be here given you in charge, on behalf of our Sovereign Lord the King; touching the death of A. B. now lying dead, of whose body you shall have the view. You shall present no man for hatred, malice, or ill-will; nor spare any through fear, favour, or affection; but a true verdict give according to the evidence and the best of your skill and knowledge: so help you God," &c.—N. B. A coroner has also authority to summon what witnesses he thinks proper.

[S] Form of a finding of a coroner's jury, when the verdict is lunacy.—(UMFREVILLE, Vol. II.)

"That the said A. B. not being of sound mind, memory and understanding, but lunatic and distracted;—or being delirious and out of his mind by a grievous and violent disease of his body,—did effect his own death by such or such means (specifying the same)—as the jurors upon oath do certify," &c. Which verdict being recorded by the coroner, here follows the coroner's warrant to bury after the view.

"Whereas I with my inquest the day and year underwritten have taken a view of the body of A. B. who not being of sound mind, memory and understanding, but lunatic and distracted, shot himself (or otherwise as the case was) and now lies dead in your parish; and have proceeded therein according to law—These are therefore to certify, that you may lawfully permit the body of the said A. B. to be buried; and for your so doing this is your warrant.

"Given under my hand and seal," &c.—and directed to the minister and churchwardens of the parish.
channel.

channel. But if even the stretched humanity of a coroner's jury cannot refuse the plain proofs of preceding rationality, then the verdict "felo de se" [T] is given, by which the body of the suicide is denied the rights of christian burial according to canon or ecclesiastical law, confirmed and ratified by statute, and the goods and chattels (but not land) of the deceased are forfeited to the king by common law and ancient usage [U].

[T] Form of a finding of a coroner's jury, when the verdict is *felo de se*.—(UMFREVILLE, Vol. II.)

"That the said A. B. not having the fear of God before his eyes, but moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil, with force and arms in and upon himself feloniously, wilfully and of his malice aforethought, did make an assault—(then the particular mode of his death is described)—and in consequence died. And the jurors upon their oaths do say, that the said A. B. in manner and by the means aforesaid, feloniously, wilfully and of his malice aforethought, did kill and murder himself, against the peace of our Lord the King, his crown and dignity. And that the said A. B. at the time of the committing the felony and murder aforesaid, had (or had not, as circumstances require) goods or chattels, &c. to the best of our knowledge."—Which verdict of *felo de se* being recorded by the coroner, he issues the following warrant for the disposal of the body. "Whereas by an inquisition taken before me, one of his Majesty's coroners, (on such a day and place) on view of the body of A. B. then and there lying dead, the jurors, in the said inquisition named, have found that the said A. B. feloniously, wilfully and of his malice aforethought killed and murdered himself—These are therefore by virtue of my office to will and require you forthwith to cause the body of the said A. B. to be buried in some public highway, and thereof to certify to me the place; and for your so doing this is your warrant." Signed and sealed by the coroner; and directed to the churchwardens and constables of the parish.

Form of the certificate or return indorsed.—"By virtue of the within warrant to us directed, we have caused the body of the said A. B. to be buried in a place (describing it) in the said parish, being in the king's highway." Signed by churchwardens and constable.

[U] Though by English law the verdict of a coroner's jury, must be either "lunacy or *felo de se*," yet (if credit may be given to the public prints) Mank-law or custom gives a greater latitude, as appears from what follows in an article dated from Whitehaven, March 4, 1789. "A few days ago H. C. of Ballachree in the Isle of Man, put an end to his life by hanging himself up with a bridle. The singularity of the instrument is not greater than the circumstance of his perpetrating the crime, whilst his father (an infirm blind man) was in the room with him. This desperado was forty-six years of age, unmarried, in good circumstances, and heir to an unincumbered estate, such as places the possessor in the most respectable rank of the Manks yeomanry. He had lately sustained the loss of a few pounds by the determination of a law-suit; and it is supposed took this method of consoling himself. The coroner's inquest, after due deliberation, returned their verdict in the aboriginal language, "Ve-Blebbin," which signifies in English (and undoubtedly in the universal language of truth) "He was a fool." This differs from the terms generally employed in these kingdoms on such occasions; but the unqualified expression of a Manks-jury conveys as just a sentiment of the cause, and an idea something more abhorrent of the fact."

Though the burial of the body in a decent and christian-like manner be of no real consequence to the deceased, yet there are few so callous to the impressions of shame, or so totally indifferent in the matter, as not to be affected in some measure, while living, with the thoughts of what is to become of their bodies when dead. Many indeed discover a wonderful anxiety on this head; of which, the special directions they leave behind them for the disposal of their bodies, and for all the funeral ceremonies, are so many proofs: and nothing would hurt the sensibility of such persons in an higher degree than the idea of indignities to which they might be exposed after death. Now the legislature prudently [x] endeavours to arrest and convert this solicitude to beneficial purposes. For if it be grateful to anticipate, while living, any respect that may probably be paid to our senseless corpse,—such as the attendance of sorrowing friends on our funeral rites,—the praises they may be inclined to bestow on our memory on that solemn occasion;—if these ideas be consolatory to a mind looking forwards to the grave, then to think we may be denied the common rites of burial, and have our names branded with disgrace and infamy, is at once to root out of the breast all such grateful sensations, and to plant in their room nought but dark and gloomy apprehensions: but this might sometimes deter a man from committing an action, which he knew must necessarily involve such dismal consequences. For since peculiar honours paid to the dead body and memory of one, who supported a great character in life, are found to be efficacious in influencing to good and praise-worthy actions, why should not the impending horrors of disgrace and ignominy after death, have a proportionable effect in deterring from bad ones? If a Pericles could be supposed to enflame the ardour of the Athenian youths by celebrating the valour of departed heroes in a public funeral oration, why should we not incline to believe, that the old Egyptian custom of sitting in judgment on the conduct of the deceased before burial was permitted, was founded in wisdom, and might equally serve to intimidate from vice and to strike an awe and reverence for virtue into the breasts of the living?

Under this refusal of christian burial the law of the land seems actually to leave the body of the suicide; since it orders no further indignities to be

[x] Neque huic mori obstat,—“nihil sentire mortuos,” quare nec damno nec pudore affici. Satis enim est id quod mortuis accidit a vivis metui, ut hoc pacto a peccato retrahantur.—GROTIUS, De Jure Belli, &c. L. II. C. xix. S. 5.

practised upon it, as it does in many other countries. It is of course excluded from interment in consecrated ground, and the warrant of the coroner only requires, "that the body shall be buried in some public highway." By virtue of this authority the body of the self-murderer is cast with the burial of a dog into an hole dug in some public highway, which fulfils the law in this point. But in some places an additional (though not an enjoined) ignominy is practised, which consists in driving a stake through the body, and also inscribing the name and crime on a board above—"as a dreadful memorial to every passenger, how he splits on the rock of self-murder."

But the power of the legislature is also exercised over the "property," which the self-murderer has left behind him. It is trusted that some use may be made of such a disposal of his property, as may possibly deter others from committing the like enormity. For whilst a man has any feelings of humanity for others left in his breast, he will be cautious of committing a crime, which may involve his most intimate connexions; his wife, his children, in poverty and ruin. It is judicious therefore on some accounts (as well as justifiable on the same principles as penal laws proceed to forfeiture of property in other cases) to hang this threatening over the head of one, who meditates suicide, viz. that his innocent family must be wretched sufferers by his guilt; that the property, which they have been taught to expect at his death, and in consequence the mode of education and living they have hitherto supported, must give way perhaps to sudden penury, without fault of their own; and thus they be not only deprived in the most shocking manner of their natural protector, but together with him and by his means, of all the comforts and enjoyments of life. In order therefore to rouse sensations of humanity in behalf of his family, and thus to strike a preventive terror of suicide, as also to pay due attention to the injured rights of society and justice in the best manner it is able, the law [x] confiscates all the personal property of a *felo de se* for the use of the crown. Thus the legisla-

[x] *Nec vero me fugit, quàm sit acerbum parentis scelera filiorum pœnis lui. Sed hoc præclare legibus comparatum est, ut caritas liberorum amiciores parentes reipublicæ redderet. Itaque Lepidus crudelis in liberos, non is qui Lepidum hostem judicat.*—Cic. ad Brutum, Ep. xii.

It is not the law which in this case acts unjustly by the family of a suicide (since the law has respect to the good of the whole community and not to the partial interests of an individual) but the self-murderer himself, who is thus atrocious and cruel to his nearest connexions.

ture exerts all the power it has over the self-murderer, by amercing him in his "reputation" and in his late "possessions:" and though the offender himself feels the effects of neither, yet who will be bold enough to affirm, that if such penalties were but impartially and generally enforced, they might not have their "preventive" uses in many cases? and the prevention of crimes is the best aim of all human punishment. It is of no consequence to maintain, that notwithstanding the severest execution of these laws self-murder would still prevail;—so does every other crime, notwithstanding its punishment. But it does not thence follow, that all crimes would not increase and multiply upon us, were there "no punishment" at all annexed to their commission.

C H A P. III.

*Two considerations leading to evade the laws against suicide; one concerning the object himself; the other his family.—The horror of the action induces to a belief, that there is a necessary madness accompanying all suicide.—This opinion fully canvassed and its erroneous grounds laid open.—If all self-murderers be "necessarily" lunatics, no grounds for the use of the term *felo de se* on any occasion.—Degrees in madness.—Lunacy a partial or temporary madness.—Suicide does not necessarily imply either absolute or partial madness.—The law adjudges lunatics to be capable of committing felonies in their lucid intervals; and that a lunatic who kills himself in one of those intervals is a *felo de se*.—It requires much precaution to judge truly in this case.—Truth and justice to be considered as well as compassion.—Not every transient fit of melancholy can denominate a man *non compos*.—Much less can he be deemed so, when no such melancholy has been greatly apparent.—Obj. "No one can say, when insanity begins."—Not probable to begin with that action, which is generally thought to indicate a complete debility.—Cool and deliberate self-murder cannot imply a sudden lunacy.—Precipitate self-murder no more implies a sudden lunacy than all other acts of outrageous violence for which men are condemned and punished.—The hasty murderer of another is punished, but the hasty murderer of himself is deemed "of necessity" a lunatic; which only tends absurdly*

to prove, that the very aggravations of a crime are pleaded in bar of its punishment.—Madness is of two sorts, natural or voluntary.—The former excludes from all legal guilt, the latter not; witness in intoxication or in violent rage producing murder.—The general proposition therefore—“suicide necessarily implies madness”—not true.—A “moral” madness to be allowed in all suicide; but this totally different from a “natural” madness.—The coroner’s jury have nothing to do with the effects of moral madness; their inquiry to be confined to those of natural madness.—The question, “when is there insanity sufficient to excuse suicide?” considered.—Judge Hale’s rule with respect to melancholic suicide noticed; another proposed.—A general rule mentioned, which comprehends all sorts of suicide; viz. when insanity can be proved sufficient to have excused the murder of another.—Objection to so great a degree of lunacy being required, answered.—Humane considerations for the family of the suicide are a second cause inclining to set aside the laws.—The just object of punishment is fled, and innocent persons alone remain to suffer in their property.—Lenient verdicts not founded in truth tend to countenance suicide.—Innocent individuals must sometimes suffer with the guilty for the benefit of the whole community.—The general evasion of the laws against suicide shows that they contain some untenable clause, and this is, “the confiscation of property.”—Considerations on the expediency of annulling this clause, and increasing the indignities to be exercised on the body.—After this the legislature will have done all in its power to create an abhorrence of the crime.—Human laws however will be of little avail in this case, where divine ones are previously despised, and all dread of futurity is wanting.

IT cannot escape any one’s observation, that though such frequent application is necessarily made to the laws of suicide, yet their penalties are seldom or ever enforced. Now the evasion arises [z] from two considerations, one of which regards the object himself, the other his family. They are both grounded on

[z] The author of the “Connoisseur” points his humorous satire against all interested evasions of these laws in the following terms. “From reading the public prints a foreigner might naturally be led to imagine, that we are the most lunatic people in the whole world. Almost every day informs us, that the coroner’s inquest has sat on the body of some miserable suicide and brought in their verdict lunacy. But it is very well known, that the inquiry has not been made into the state of mind of the deceased, but into his fortune and family. The law has indeed provided, that the deliberate self-murderer should be treated like a brute and denied the rites of burial. But of hum-
T t 2 “dreds

on principles of humanity, and therefore must not be precipitately censured; but it does not thence follow, that they must also be implicitly approved; since however amiable it be to blend mercy with judgment, yet the example is dangerous, which exalts compassion above truth and justice. The first humane consideration is exercised towards the wretched object himself, the fate of whose breathless body (and in consequence of his future good or evil memorial) is to be determined by a judicial verdict. When a coroner's jury is summoned, it is not to be supposed, but that the individuals composing it may have a just abhorrence of the crime of self-murder, and be desirous of reprobating its sinful commission. But it is also fact, that the very horror of the crime often tends to bias their judgments, by inducing them to conclude, that so unnatural a deed must of necessity proceed from a distracted or lunatic state of mind; and that even if no symptoms of that kind have previously appeared, yet that the very action itself is a sufficient proof of a failure in the understanding at the moment of commission. Under such a persuasion no other verdict can possibly be given, but that of "lunacy;" which excluding all offence effectually screens from all reproach.

But is there not a greater share of humanity than of truth in the supposition, that the mere act of suicide "necessarily" implies lunacy? Is there no distinction to be made between a violent but voluntary perversion [A] of reason, and its involuntary loss? If suicide "necessarily" implies, that the person committing it was insane, where is the use of any further inquiry than to ascertain the means by

"dreds of lunatics by purchase, I never knew this sentence executed but on one poor cobbler, who
 "hanged himself in his own stall. A penniless poor dog, who has not left enough to defray the funeral
 "charges, may perhaps be excluded the church-yard; but self-murder by a pistol genteelly mounted,
 "or the Paris-hilted sword, qualifies the polite owner for a sudden death, and entitles him to a pompous burial and a monument setting forth his virtues in Westminster-Abbey."

Without comment on the above, the present writer in a work of this nature only wishes to elucidate those general causes, which make the community at large so indulgent to every favourable interpretation of the laws against suicide.

[A] "The excuse of not being in his senses ought not to be strained to that length, to which our coroner's juries are apt to carry it; viz. that the very act of suicide is an evidence of insanity; as if every man, who acted contrary to reason, had no reason at all: for the same argument would prove every other criminal non compos, as well as the self-murderer."—BLACKSTONE'S Com. Vol. IV. B. IV. C. xiv.

which a man came by his death? For it being once proved to have been by his own hands, all consequent investigation for the purpose of finding a verdict is needless; he was of course insane; and the legal distinctions between a lunatic and a *felo de se* have been at all times nugatory and ill-grounded. There never can have been an instance of a *felo de se* properly so called in the interpretation of law: and the customs of all nations concerning self-murderers, as well as the particular constitutions by which the supposed crime has been stigmatised, have been grounded in error and executed in injustice.

But as this idea of a necessary lunacy in suicide is prevalent, and obtains more especially among those, who are deemed compassionate, because they follow the first impressions of their sensibility rather than the principles of sound reason, it will be worth while to investigate, whether such an opinion be not founded in gross error and productive of much evil consequence? since whatever tends to lessen the imputation and guilt of a real crime in our opinions, tends equally to encourage and promote its commission. It is maintained that "to kill oneself is so strange and unnatural an action, that none but a madman [B] could commit it:" or to give the argument its full force at once—"suicide implies "madness—madness excludes guilt—therefore there is no guilt or crime in "suicide." As the conclusion drawn from these premises is logical and important, it behoves us thoroughly to examine into their pretensions to truth: or in other words to inquire, whether suicide necessarily implies madness? and whether madness necessarily excludes all guilt? For if a failure can be proved in the general truth of either of these propositions, the general consequence falls to the ground; or if they are only true in part, the truth of the consequence is partial also.

An explanation of terms is necessary previous to all reasoning about them; but the only ambiguous one here is "madness." Now by madness is in general meant, such an alienation or distraction of mind, as renders a man not only destitute of the "use," but of the "powers" of reason. But madness may be either total or partial, permanent or temporary; that is, a person so

[B] Quem mala stultitia & quæcunque inscitia veri
Cæcum agit "infantum" Chryssippi porticus & grex
Autumat. ————— Hor.

affected may be either equally mad in all parts of his conduct, or only so in respect of particular subjects and on particular occasions; and again, this madness may either continue equally at all times, or it may only be visible at certain times and seasons. The absolute and permanent failure of reason is more especially denominated "madness;" the interrupted derangement, or that which appears only by fits and starts, or at certain periods and seasons, is more usually called "lunacy" (from the very observable influence, which the moon in her changes exerts over the disorders of the human brain); but lunacy during its fits is treated as a real madness.

Now that suicide implies no necessity of an absolute and permanent madness is agreed on all hands; and it is equally agreed, that where such a perfect madness exists, there can be no guilt, because there can be no moral agency. But as all the doubts and difficulties arise in cases of lunacy or temporary fits of madness, the question is, "Does suicide necessarily imply lunacy?" Now the law is so far from suffering lunacy or partial fits of madness to be an exemption at all times from criminal processes, that it adjudges lunatics during their lucid intervals to be capable of committing felonies, and in consequence of contracting guilt and suffering punishment. If therefore a lunatic can be proved to have committed suicide during a lucid interval, he is adjudged in the eye of the law [c] to be a *felo de se*. Suicide then does not necessarily imply lunacy, even when committed by one, who is acknowledged at times to be a lunatic; because it is possible he may commit it in a lucid interval. Here however there is need of the greatest precaution in determining the matter. For as on the one hand, it would be a breach of compassion towards the defects of human nature to judge unfavourably, where insanity might really have prevailed, so on the other instantly to decide, that a man must have been insane at the time of his suicide, because he had been so in some former portions of his life, is opening a wide door to the commission of a great crime in supposed innocence. Every particular case will have its attendant circumstances, according to which a conscientious jury will find a verdict, when they mean to declare that verdict on principles of truth and justice, not on those of mere pity and compassion.

[c] "If a real lunatic kill himself in a lucid interval, he is a *felo de se* as well as another man."—BLACKSTONE'S COMM. Vol. IV. B. IV. C. xiv.

But

But as suicide does not necessarily imply lunacy even in those, who in some preceding parts of their lives have been acknowledged lunatics; so neither is every transient fit of melancholy, nor every hypochondriacal [D] affection sufficient to denominate a man insane. But before such a judgment can be formed, there must have been such a continued and regular attack of these violent depressions, as shall really and essentially have tended to debilitate the whole nervous system, and to have impaired the faculties of the mind. Such being the case, much less can suicide necessarily imply lunacy, where no previous signs of it, even by transient fits of melancholy and despair, have been strikingly apparent. It may be objected, "who can pretend to assign the specific moment in which lunacy begins to mark its way? There may be an "incipient" failure of reason, which shall have escaped observation, but which may nevertheless have inclined a man to the perpetration of his own murder." But is it probable in the lowest degree, that the very first appearance of declining reason should commence with that action, which seems (when proceeding from real madness) to be rather the completion of its final debility? Is it likely that a man should never have discovered the least previous symptoms of a wild and disordered imagination, the least signs of a confused brain, before he proceeds to scatter those brains in the air? Nothing is attempted to be brought in proof of so extraordinary a position, but "that suicide is an action of so great horror in itself, and so contrary to the feelings of human nature and its first principles, those of self-preservation, that none but a madman could possibly adopt it." All this however only proves a gross abuse and perversion of reason, but not its final overthrow. The case of cool and deliberate self-murder shall first be considered.

Do not the perpetrators of this exhibit more proof of composure in all their proceedings on this very point of self-destruction than of any sudden derangement? For is there not an end proposed and steadily pursued? Are not proper means adapted to that end, and if frustrated by unexpected disappointments again renewed? Is there any action of life carried on with more art and contrivance, with more caution and secrecy, or whose ceremonials are more nicely

[D] "The law very rationally judges, that every melancholy or hypochondriacal fit does not deprive a man of the capacity of discerning right from wrong, which is necessary to form a legal excuse."—BLACKSTONE'S Comm. Vol. IV. B. IV. C. xiv,

adjusted than that which is to put an end to it? Do not such men (like Abiathophel in holy writ) often “arise and get them to their own homes, and set their household in order”—before they despatch themselves? Do they not make their last wills—dispose of their effects (by which it is plain, how little idea they have of the law’s taking its due course against them) and write letters to their friends, in the last hours and almost moments of their lives, in a style of composure and reasoning, which only shows the error, not the distraction of their judgment? Do they not sometimes justify its practice in others and defend its principle in certain situations? Why then should it be deemed surprising, that they should execute it on themselves? And yet, when those circumstances arise, when the moment of execution is arrived, all is suddenly changed; and the poor deluded being must have been seized with an instantaneous fit of phrensy sufficient to set aside all the previous rationality of his life, and thus to wipe off the stain of that foul deed, for which insanity alone can be pleaded in excuse. What consistency is there in such an opinion? or how is lunacy necessarily implied in many instances of deliberate and justified suicide?

Again; with regard to precipitate self-murder, or that which is perpetrated in a fit of impetuosity, of disgust and despair, it cannot be allowed to be an action necessarily implying insanity; “because,” though men devise and perpetrate the most atrocious crimes against each other, though they commit the greatest depredations on their own property (in gaming for instance among other methods); though they put their health and their very lives into the most imminent hazard in numberless pursuits of folly and vice; or of imaginary honour (as in the duel); in short though they are accustomed to trample on the laws of men, and to defy all the precepts of God;—yet in the midst of these excesses and outrages against all common sense and reason, they are never deemed distracted or treated as madmen. But still closer in point;—though men under the influence of sudden transports of passion commit actions of such cruelty, as afterwards excite the greatest horrors in themselves, yet these paroxysms of fury are still amenable to justice, and cannot be sheltered under a verdict of lunacy. The hasty murderer of another in a fit of sudden rage is justly doomed to suffer condign punishment; but the hasty murderer of himself, in a like sudden start of disgust and rage against his own life, is to be deemed a lunatic. But why is this distinction?—because the murderer of himself is said

to have committed a crime of still greater horror than is the murder of another ; a crime more against the first principles of nature, sense and religion : hence, strange as it may seem, the very aggravations of guilt are pleaded in bar of its punishment. Suicide then, whether deliberate or precipitate, no more “ necessarily” implies madness or lunacy than every other great crime can be said to do it ; and till men are agreed to confine every notorious and “ living” offender, as labouring under insanity, they can have no right to pass so favourable a sentence on “ every” self-murderer merely because he has been one [E].

It may be said further, that it can scarce be deemed wonderful, if a person, who has once determined on his own murder, should occasionally appear agitated, be lost in mental absences, and discover signs of unsteadiness and wandering : for all which, when the fatal deed has been perpetrated, he would be deemed without hesitation a lunatic. But is there not equal truth and justice in supposing, that these discomposures of intellect (of late only and partially perceived) were “ consequences” of his previous sentence against his own life rather than “ causes,” which led to its execution ? If this be granted, there can be as little propriety in allowing such occasional agitations to be pleaded in bar of judgment against the self-murderer, as there would be in suffering the qualms and inquietudes of conscience, which might manifestly disturb a man’s tranquillity of mind between the secret purpose and the execution of his plot, to set aside his legal condemnation for the murder of another.

The second point of inquiry was to be—“ does madness “ necessarily” exclude “ all guilt ?” and though the answer may seem to be obvious, that it does ; yet it must not be allowed without some reservation. There is a madness

[E] “ It is wonderful, that the repugnancy to nature and reason, which is the highest aggravation of the offence of self-murder, should be thought to make it impossible to be any crime at all ; which cannot but be the necessary consequence of this position, “ that none but a madman can be guilty of it.” May it not be argued with the same reason, that the murder of a child or of a parent is against nature and reason, and consequently that no man in his senses can commit it ? But has a man therefore no use of his reason, because he acts against right reason ? Why may not the passions of grief and discontent tempt a man knowingly to act against the principles of nature and reason in this case, as those of love, hatred, revenge and such like are too well known to do in others ?”—HAWKINS’S Pleas of the Crown, B. I. C. xxvii. 1716. Folio.

natural [F] and a madness voluntary; for the effects of the former we cannot be answerable, but for those of the latter we certainly may. The law assigns an instance of the latter in the vice of drunkenness. For what is drunkenness, but a temporary and voluntary madness, all whose outrages are punishable? Or what is ungoverned rage, but a transient madness, the fury of whose murderous hand, when raised against another, meets with no legal indulgence; and as little deserves to do so when raised against self? Madness therefore must not be allowed

[F] Hale distinguishes madness into three sorts. 1. *Dementia naturalis*; ideocy or fatuity a native. 2. *Dementia accidentalis vel adventitia*, which proceeds from various causes. 3. *Dementia affectata*, or a voluntarily contracted madness; such as, drunkenness. Of the second sort he says, that it is distinguishable into a "partial" insanity of mind, and into a "total" insanity. "The former is either in respect to things, *quoad hoc vel illud insanire*: some persons that have a competent use of reason in respect of some subjects are yet under a particular dementia in respect of some particular discourses, subjects or applications; or else it is partial in respect of degrees; and this is the condition of very many, especially melancholy persons, who for the most part discover their defect in excessive fears and griefs, and yet are not wholly destitute of the use of reason; and this partial insanity seems not to excuse them in the committing of any offence for its matter capital; for doubtless most persons that are felons of themselves, and others are under a degree of partial insanity when they commit these offences: it is very difficult to define the invisible line that divides perfect and partial insanity; but it must rest upon circumstances duly to be weighed and considered both by the judge and jury, lest on the one side there be a kind of inhumanity towards the defects of human nature, or on the other side too great an indulgence given to great crimes: the best measure that I can think of is this;—such a person as labouring under melancholy distempers, hath yet ordinarily as great understanding, as ordinarily a child of fourteen years hath, is such a person as may be guilty of treason or felony."

"Again, this accidental dementia, whether total or partial, is distinguished into that which is permanent or fixed, and that which is interpolated, and by certain periods and vicissitudes: the former is phrenesis or madness, the latter is that which is usually called lunacy; for the moon hath a great influence in all diseases of the brain, especially in this kind of dementia;—and therefore crimes committed by them in such their distempers are under the same judgment, as those, whereof we have before spoken; namely, according to the measure or degree of their distemper; the person that is absolutely mad for a day, killing a man, or himself in that distemper, is equally not guilty, as if he were mad without intermission.—But crimes committed in their lucid intervals are of the same nature and subject to the same punishment, as if they had no such deficiency" at other times.

"The third sort of dementia is that, which is *dementia affectata*, namely, drunkenness. This vice doth deprive men of the use of reason, and puts many men into a perfect, but temporary phrensy; and therefore according to some civilians, such a person committing homicide shall not be punished simply for the crime of homicide, but shall suffer for his drunkenness answerable to the nature of the crime occasioned thereby; so that yet the formal cause of his punishment is rather the drunkenness than the crime committed in it: but by the laws of England such a person shall have no privilege by this voluntarily contracted madness, but shall have the same judgment, as if he were in his right senses."—
HALE'S Hist. Pleas of the Crown, Part I. C. iv.

"necessarily" to exclude all guilt, unless the proposition be confined to "involuntary" madness. Wherefore the original syllogism—"Suicide implies madness—madness excludes guilt—therefore no guilt in suicide"—must be lowered or expressed in less general terms before it can be allowed to be true. But when properly qualified it will stand thus:—"Suicide may be occasioned by madness;—madness when involuntary excludes all guilt;—and therefore suicide when produced by involuntary madness is free from all guilt:—which will readily be granted on all hands.

Yet it may be allowed, that there is a sort of madness in "every" act of suicide, even when all idea of lunacy is excluded. This is a "moral" madness; a madness [c] of the heart not of the head; a derangement of conduct arising from the misapplication and perversion of reason, not from its debility or total failure. But there is as much difference between this detraction of reason from her throne by our own violence, and her voluntary abdication or forsaking it, as between thrusting our best friend and adviser from our bosom, and his spontaneous refusal of his advice in our greatest emergencies. A man is strictly accountable for the consequences of his subsequent conduct in the former case; but such deviations as follow in the latter may be more pitiable than punishable. However such moral distractions as after having tost the man on the swollen tides of boisterous passions, split his vessel at length on the rocks of remorse, despair, and suicide, come not within the cognisance of a coroner's jury. These have nothing to do with the misapplication and perversion of reason, but are to inquire into the plain fact of having any powers of reason at all. But this necessary distinction seems too often to be overlooked, when it is determined, that the man, who has spent his whole life in committing moral felonies of a smaller nature against his reason (for which however there would be no scruple in punishing him) must therefore be acquitted, because he has at length accomplished the greatest possible injury against her, by having most avowedly, feloniously [H] and maliciously murdered both her and himself.

But

[c] —————I grant the deed

Is madness: but the madness of the heart,——YOUNG, Night V.

[H] "Such murder, as is occasioned through an express purpose to do some personal injury to him, who is slain, in particular; which seems to be most properly called express malice."——HAWKINS, B. I. C. xxxi.

But since the point of natural lunacy itself may be difficult to ascertain, and its degrees still more so; it may be asked,—“when is a man to be deemed “sufficiently insane to screen him from all “legal” guilt in suicide?” This is a question of the more importance, because in its practical determination the calls of humanity and justice seem often at variance; and the fine feelings of the former are frequently opposed to the well-grounded decisions of the latter. In the present case indeed they generally set aside the latter, notwithstanding the equity of the old adage—“be just before you are generous.” But as “truth alone” is the object of the present inquiry, we must never lose sight of her determinations, but make them the ground-work of a general answer. However in pursuing this track it is earnestly requested, that the ideas of the present writer may not be mistaken, as if he wished to be (what his soul abhors) the promulgator of an harsh or cruel interpretation. The effusions of private humanity are interesting and amiable; though they are known to make wild work (as might be shown in numberless instances), where they are not under the guidance of discretion, of justice, and truth. But there is a more public-spirited humanity, which rising above the partial interests of individuals, dares to consult the good of the “whole;” and such enlarged benevolence neither needs restrictions nor merits misconstruction. Thus much it is necessary to premise, because every one seems pleased with a lenient verdict, without duly considering its evil tendency, or the sacrifices of truth that it occasions to procure it in many instances. But to the point.

A general distinction of suicide may be made into the “melancholic and the outrageous;” that is, into that which proceeds from a violent depression of the animal spirits, and that which is the effect of some burst of impetuous passion. As to the case of “melancholy,”—when are its degrees sufficient to excuse the legal guilt of suicide? The great and humane Judge Hale has left

“Wherever death is caused by an act done with a murderous intent, it makes the offender a murderer.”—HAWKINS’S Pleas of the Crown, B. I. C. xxvii. Folio. 1716.

Murder is always charged with a “*felonice ex malitia sua præcognita interfecit & murtheravit*.” This is strictly applicable to the self-murderer (the case of real lunacy excepted). His design against his own life is complete and determined, which constitutes his malice. It must also be affirmed of the self-murderer in a peculiar manner—“that he has no fear of God before his eyes.” In every sense therefore the suicide is guilty of murder, and that of the most unnatural kind.

the following rule. "That a person, who, labouring under melancholy distempers, has yet ordinarily as great understanding as ordinarily a child of fourteen years hath, is such a person as may be guilty of treason or felony:"—because a child of that age would be punishable for the same. But if the understanding be deranged and debilitated by melancholic distempers below the legal standard of discretion affixed to a certain period of life, it would be unjust to make it amenable for the actions of the man, who is as it were by these means returned into a state of second childhood. The rule laid down by this judge leans as much as possible to the side of humanity; since if a suicide be declared insane by this rule of judging, who has yet been deemed sufficiently in his senses to manage all his worldly affairs to the end of his life, and even to dispose of his property by a will executed perhaps just previous to his death, and manifestly after his deadly resolution was taken, this rule allows him the supposed discretion of "twenty-one" years in the management and disposal of his fortunes (which should make him also responsible to justice); whilst it adjudges him to possess less than the sense and discretion of a child under "fourteen" years of age, with regard to the management and protection of his own life; by which award he escapes from justice. A more exact rule therefore (and also one of more easy determination) seems to be, "that the effects of melancholy should then only be deemed sufficient to constitute a legal lunacy incapacitating from committing a felony, when such proofs of an imbecillity of understanding at the time of the decease are brought before a jury, as would have been sufficient to have taken out a statute of lunacy for the protection of his life and property." If it do not appear, that there would have been any grounds to have supported such a procedure in his life-time, or from the circumstances attending his death, then is there as little reason for adjudging him to have been sufficiently and legally "sane" for the management and protection of his fortunes, but legally "insane" with regard to the management and protection of his own life. Such distinctions of sanity and insanity are too fine spun to be just or equitable. It is not at all necessary to inquire, whether the relations of the deceased "would" have proceeded in this manner, because a variety of reasons might have conspired to prevent the taking such a step; but if there were not insanity enough at his death to have "justified" such a process, neither could there have been enough to have stamped legal innocence on the accomplishment of his own murder.

But

But whatever may be thought of this rule of judging in cases of melancholy, it is easy to propose another, which will comprehend all cases of suicide, whether of an outrageous or melancholic nature, and which seems consistent with every idea of justice and equity. The point of mere humanity to individuals (as giving place to the good of the whole) is not now under consideration; but that of legal and strict justice. There may be cases, wherein the murderer of another may be as much or even more entitled to our compassion than the murderer of himself; neither indeed does it appear, why so much compassion in general is due to the murderers of themselves for their own sakes, since there is not a principle more dangerous to the peace of society (as has been abundantly shown) than that which allows and justifies the practice. This general rule is—"that a suicide should be exculpated from censure then only, when the proofs of insanity before a jury are such, as would have exculpated him in case he had murdered another man." To this no doubt it will instantly be objected; "What then! may not a man be deemed sufficiently disordered in his understanding to exculpate his own murder, who yet had sense enough left to have started at the idea of murdering another? Surely this is contrary to all practice, where the least degree of lunacy is thought sufficient to ward off guilt!" The question here is, not what "is," but what on all legal principles "ought to be" the practice? In further answer it must be remembered, that the idea here suggested is not, whether the suicide was mad enough to have been supposed capable of murdering any other man, but whether, if he "had" actually murdered one under the same state or impressions of his mind, he "would" have been exculpated? For it must be admitted, that none but a notorious and outrageous madman is ready to kill indifferently any man he meets without cause or provocation. But as a man not under the influence of such universal distraction (or of any distraction at all) may yet have his particular cause of malice against the life of this or that individual; so also a man may have certain reasons of disgust or malice against his own life, without having the least grounds of desire to deprive another man of his. The distinction therefore is necessary, which maintains, that the point of inquiry ought not to be, whether a man "would" have killed another, but whether if he actually "had" so done, there were proofs of insanity sufficient to have acquitted him of all guilt? and according to that determination to acquit him of his own death, or to condemn him for its accomplishment. For put the different cases.—A murders B, and spares the

the life of C: he has reasons no doubt in his own mind for making the distinction, as well as sense sufficient to discriminate the objects. Again, A spares the life of both B and C, and murders himself: for which also he has his reasons and his sense of distinctions. But in either case a murder has equally been committed, which occasions the interference of law, in order to pass sentence on the murderer. This sentence is to be executed with equal impartiality, whether against A, B or C; and no excuse is to be admitted for the killing of A, which would not hold good for the killing of B; no plea or degree of lunacy is to be suffered to vindicate in the one case and not in the other. "But A (it is replied) having murdered himself cannot now suffer any legal punishment." This only serves to show, that he is out of the reach of "feeling" legal punishment (and so are such other felons and traitors, as have fled their country) but advances not one step towards proving, that what he has committed does not "deserve" it. But the point of A's actual deserts in this action can only be determined in law by proving, whether he had sense sufficient to know, "that he was committing a murder?" If he be adjudged to have been capable of discriminating thus much, then the law knows no distinction between his murdering another person or himself; and consequently the degrees of lunacy in proof of innocence in either case must be equal. The law only distinguishes in its mode of punishment, which the necessity of the case requires; the murderer in one instance is fled beyond personal sufferings, in the other he is at hand to endure them. Such a degree of lunacy therefore, as would have excused the suicide in his murder of another person, seems to be the only legal foundation of his exemption from guilt in his own murder; and as a coroner's jury has no authority superior to that of a common jury, it does not appear that its members are more at liberty than common jurors are, when sitting on a case of common murder, to determine according to certain feelings of humanity [1] in opposition to common sense and judgment, or the established forms and usages of

[1] After reprobating the self-murder, which proceeds from previous crimes, Jortin goes on thus. "But in our country, where spleen and melancholy and lunacy abound, the "far greater part" of those unhappy persons, who thus end their days, have a disordered understanding, and know not what they do; and in all dubious cases of this kind, it is surely safer and better to judge too favourably than too severely of the deceased; and our juries do well to incline, as they commonly do, on the merciful side, as far as reason can possibly permit."—Sermons, Vol. V. on the Sixth Commandment.

of law. The amiableness of humanity degenerates into error and its example becomes dangerous, when it is set up in opposition to [κ] the sacredness of oaths, the principles of truth, and the decisions of sound judgment.

It is now time to proceed to the second consideration, which is apt to influence the sentiments of the public at large in favour of a lenient verdict on these mournful occasions; and that respects the "family" of the self-murderer. When a coroner and his jury are assembled over the body of a suicide, however they may abhor (as was before observed) the crime he has committed, yet a scene of commiseration at the same time must be supposed to be working in their breasts, in behalf of an innocent and unfortunate family, who, plunged in a moment into an agony of distress, need no accumulation of their poignant sorrow; but whose fortunes are also actually at stake and depend on the clemency of a legal verdict. In other cases, where confiscation of property (and consequently an involving of innocence with guilt) follows the condemnation of a criminal, the jury are not so immediately led to the consideration of that point. The criminal himself stands before them, and is capable of suffering the punishment of his evil-doings in his own person. The infliction of that personal punishment alone engrosses their attention—"he has deserved and he must suffer." But in adjudging the case of self-murder, the just object of punishment being fled beyond reach, the concerns of his hapless family more immediately and naturally insinuate themselves into the breasts of his judges; who conceive also the "whole" punishment of the crime as ready to fall on the innocent, while the guilty escapes its smallest participation. Hence they are ready to adopt the slightest circumstances in favour of lunacy, or even to give into the opinion (however absurd it has been proved to be) that the action itself implies insanity.

The present writer perfectly agrees with the humane Jortin, "that a jury should be merciful in this (as they should in all other cases also) as far as reason will permit." But when they transgress all bounds of reason in their favourable verdict, they seem to set aside all distinction of rational and irrational: and though much suicide certainly proceeds from melancholy disorders, yet a great part of it also is engendered by vice and nurtured by infidelity; for which reason it is fitting that such should meet with the highest degree of censure and reprobation.

[κ] The oath administered by the coroner to his jury is equally solemn with that taken by other jurors. "As you shall present no man for hatred, malice or ill-will, so neither shall you spare any through fear, favour or affection, but true verdict give according to the evidence and the best of your knowledge."

Were

Were it not for the interests and concerns of the family, there could be little doubt but that the verdict lunacy would often be changed into *felo de se*: but as the law now stands, by the former judgment the great point in view—"the preservation of property to the family"—is secured. Suicide however by this means meets with very little discouragement, if it be not rather publicly countenanced; since the perpetrator of it is delivered, not only from all anxiety (if ever he had any) of his family becoming "legal" sufferers by his untimely death, but from all dread of consequent infamy on his own name and reputation. It were then much to be wished, that juries on such occasions would consider themselves rather to be guardians of "life" than "property;" and would reflect that in their legal capacity they owe a duty to the community at large, which ought not to be superseded by any [L] private regards; and consequently, that as long as the law continues in its present form, they would conceive it to be more advantageous to the public interest, that reason, truth and justice should prevail in finding a proper verdict, rather than by an undue leaning towards the side of mercy at the expence of all these, the whole effect and purport of the law should be completely [M] overturned. But with respect to the alleviations of innocent sufferings, our supreme governor of the state, to whom these forfeitures are made, need not be reminded of that part of his royal office—"to execute judgment in mercy;" and all exertions of clemency towards the family of the deceased would be truly amiable and generous from that exalted quarter. Whereas a misguided process of indiscriminate humanity in the lower tribunal sets aside the whole public censure of self-murder, by suffering it to pass without any reprobation in the eye of the law.

The nature of society and of legal punishments is well known to be such, that the innocent must often be involved to a certain degree with the guilty. If a parent for instance be fined for any misdemeanor, or imprisoned, or put to death, his innocent family must needs be sufferers through his offence. Every

[L] Let them remember their oath "to decide without fear, favour or affection."

[M] "As useless laws debilitate such as are necessary, so those that may easily be eluded, weaken the legislation. Every law ought to have its effect, and no one should ever be suffered to deviate from it by a particular convention."—MONTESQUIEU's Spirit of Laws, B. XXIX. C. xvi.

example [N] of public justice almost necessarily involves some penalties on innocence: this cannot be prevented, and the feelings of the individual must yield herein to the benefit of the whole community. But it being a matter of public notoriety, that the laws against suicide are palpably evaded, and that evasion readily acquiesced in, they may reasonably [o] be suspected of having some undesirable basis or principle within them, which tends to elude their own execution: and this seems to exist in the clause relative to a confiscation of the offender's property. Though therefore there can be no doubt of the right of the legislature to impose such a confiscation in this, as well as in many other cases, yet the expediency of such a clause to answer its own purpose may be fairly questioned. If it tend to annul the effect of the whole law, it cannot be a desirable clause and had better be itself [P] expunged. But that this is the case is

[N] *Omne magnum exemplum habet aliquid ex iniquo, quod contra singulos utilitate publicâ rependitur.*—TACITUS.

[o] "Legislators should remember, that the acerbity of justice deadens its execution; and that the increase of human corruptions proceeds not from the moderation of punishment, but from the impunity of criminals.—Cruel laws have a natural tendency to their own dissolution in the observance of mankind."—EDEN'S *Principles of Penal Law*. 8vo. 1771.

[P] The confiscation of property in cases of adjudged self-murder is said to have no longer place in France. "Confiscation of goods was formerly pronounced; but Marnac and the Annotator of Loyfel remark, that according to the new jurisprudence that penalty was no longer inflicted."—(See *Encyclopédie*, ad vocem *Suicide*.)

The author has been favoured with a particular account from Geneva relative to confiscation; which is to the following purport. "Our law concerning the confiscation of goods has not been observed a great while; and I am sure there will not be one example of confiscation in future; because there have been in our small councils a short time ago, several speeches made against that law, which orders the confiscation of goods in cases of self-murder: and the only motive that the abrogation of it has not been proposed in our general council (which alone has the power of abolishing any law) is, that it has been thought more easy to interpret that law favourably; and that therefore it need not be abolished; and this the rather, because it is impossible to foresee with certainty, how such a proposition would be accepted in so numerous an assembly as our general council, which is composed of all the citizens."

The practice of dragging on the hurdle was also formerly in use at Geneva; but was laid aside about fifty years ago, because inflicted on the body of one, who though so adjudged was afterwards found to be not a self-murderer. But with submission this was no ground for totally laying aside the practice, any more than it would have been never to have hanged another man for murder, because an innocent man had once been condemned and executed.—See Notes end of Part V. C. i.

very plain; since if ever a doubt is raised of the truth of the verdict lunacy, immediate appeal is made to the propriety of preserving property to the family; that is to those, who are not only totally innocent of the offence, but also probably great sufferers by its commission. If the pecuniary interests of the family therefore could be detached from the censure of the crime, it would be an important point gained; because it might give more frequent opportunities of executing the other part of the self-murderer's sentence, which though "he" cannot personally feel, might act in terrorem to "others."

It should be considered in behalf of a revision of the laws against suicide, that there is a material difference between an old, unrepealed law containing clauses, which could not be enforced in modern days, but which there is no occasion of ever calling forth; and one to which though it militates against all private feelings and is deemed severe on the innocent, a daily reference must be made. The former grows obsolete and dies away of itself; but the impediments in the way of enforcing the latter teach quirks, evasions, and such a sporting with oaths, as is highly prejudicial to the interests of legislation, the cause of truth and first principles of morality. In such a revision it might also seem expedient to increase the indignities to be practised on the body of a self-murderer to as great a degree as possible. It might not only be refused all rites of burial, but be exposed naked to public view, be dragged on an hurdle in the most ignominious posture, and undergo every disgraceful mark of shame, contempt and abhorrence. The populace on these occasions might be harangued with energy on the foulness of the crime, and then the carcass be delivered over (like that of the common murderer) for the purposes of public dissection; so that he, who had voluntarily withdrawn himself from being further useful to society in his life, might become so in his death. The name also might be registered in some disgraceful manner, as is the custom [Q] in France. This treatment might be apt to excite an horror in the breast of all beholders, and might be capable of producing some good, provided it was done indiscriminately

[Q] In France the names of self-murderers are entered in their public registers in "red ink," to distinguish them from others and to perpetuate their disgrace.

Hanging the body in chains, or exposing it to rot on an eminence, as a proper food for the bird of prey, seems liable to some objection. If it be done in a sequestered place, few see it or know it; and thus the supposed effect of raising an horror of the crime is lost. If it be done in a public one, it produces

discriminately and without respect of persons or sexes. At least when thus much had been done to show a marked abhorrence of the crime, and to punish it as much as possible on the reputation of its perpetrator, without involving the innocent family (who seem for obvious reasons more particularly entitled to our compassion in this than in many other cases) the legislature would have performed to the extent of its influence.

Let these then or such like indignities be imposed on every one, who deserves the name of self-murderer, and let them work all the good they can; neither is it to be doubted, but they will effect "some," though not all that could be wished: they will at least keep up a spirit of abhorrence against so unnatural a crime, which will insensibly act in many cases to prevent its perpetration. But it is to be feared, that where the voice of nature and humanity has been stifled, where the ties of social intercourse and domestic union have been loosed, the duties of morality and religion disregarded, and the dread of futurity set at nought, there all threatenings of human laws must to a certain degree be ineffectual. What weight can considerations of sublunary property—in what channel it shall flow—have over one, who voluntarily resigns all connexions with it? what influence can the thoughts of subsequent indignities to be practised on his lifeless body by others have over him, who has previously treated it himself with the greatest possible indignity? who has given up all its consequence by a violent destruction of its vital powers? What can he care for the transient exposure of his body upon earth, who by such a voluntary and hasty exposure of his soul to continual punishment, shows how indifferent he is to all prospect of futurity? However bound therefore the legislature may be (and it certainly is so in an high degree) to stigmatise this growing sin in every possible shape, yet to eradicate it, or even to render it unfrequent, requires an exertion of a different nature, not to be compassed by the penalties of human edicts. Such an evil as this must imbibe its remedy from an alteration in the habits and principles of the parties themselves, who may be inclined to judge favourably of

duces a familiarity with the object, which it is more desirable to avoid. "One" scene of horror should be exhibited to the public in exposing the dead body of every self-murderer, and then that body should be delivered over for the purposes of dissection, which is the most beneficial appropriation to the public. But a constant sight of horrid objects (as when they are exposed in chains, &c.) only produces a familiarity with the dreadful scene, and tends thereby to blunt the edge of every fine feeling, and to destroy the benevolent prejudices of tenderness and compassion.

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its commission. False maxims of conduct must be rooted out of the mind and true ones nourished in their room; fashion must bow down before sense and judgment; honour and virtue must be united in name and in practice; passion must subside and reason triumph; the joys of the moment must give way to the prospect of future happiness; and the fear of man must yield to the fear of God: but all this is beyond the power of human laws alone to effect, and can only be accomplished by an uniform obedience to those of divine institution.

C H A P. IV.

Suicide gains ground in most countries in proportion to the progress of infidelity and free-thinking.—Account of suicide in France; as frequent there as in England.—Geneva-suicide.—One cause of suicide very similar in Geneva and England, viz. Melancholy.—Difficult to obtain an accurate account of the number of suicides in all England.—Only to be furnished from the records of inquisitions taken by coroners.—Reasons why such accounts would be very imperfect.—Annual average of inquisitions taken by the coroners of the metropolis on the bodies of suicides.—Particulars collected from the coroners of the county of Kent.—Reasons assigned why suicide “seems” to abound so much more in Kent than in the metropolis.—Comparative state of suicide in England and Geneva.

THE practice of suicide in this island has been conceived so much to exceed that in other nations, as to have made the English almost proverbially noted for their giving way to so horrid a [R] custom. Whether this opinion (which seems daily to lose ground) has not at all times been taken up on vague foundations may be a matter of doubt; but of which it is difficult to ascertain the truth or falsity. All that can be maintained for certain is, that the practice of criminal suicide must gain ground in every country, in proportion as its inhabitants resign themselves up more and more to the principles of free-thinking,

[R] The French have adopted our word Suicide into their language as an Anglicism.

which

which patronises all crimes and particularly that in question; it being the immediate offspring of infidelity and a disbelief of future rewards and punishments.

The author has received information from private hands (which is also corroborated by the authorities quoted below [s]) that the practice of suicide really abounds in France as much at least as in England; but that on account of the restraints on their press, particularly in the articles of their common newspapers, it is less diffused to public observation:—that its principal causes in France are seated in poverty, distress, and that general impatience under sufferings, which can only be corrected and consoled by a firm belief in the principles of true religion:—that there have been instances of as great levity in French as in English suicide; since the indifference to life of a [r] Bourdeaux and his companion, and

[s] “Abbé Fontana told a very ingenious friend of mine, that more persons put an end to their lives at Paris than in London. He had this account from the Lieutenant of the Police.”—FALCONER’S Remarks on the Influence of Climate, &c. 4to. B. I. C. vi.

“The tragical accounts of suicide, which fill the English newspapers, have given strangers room to think, that suicide is more common in England than elsewhere. I question however, whether Paris does not afford as many instances of this kind of folly, as London; at least if our Gazettes kept an exact register. But by the wisdom of our government, the public papers are better regulated, and the calamities of private people concealed from the view of scandal.”—VOLTAIRE, Vol. IV. 8vo. in Part entitled, “*Mélanges de Littérature, d’Histoire & de Philosophie.*”

[r] The author was favoured with the following particulars, and likewise with a French copy of the will, by a gentleman of eminence in Doctors-Commons, whose friend being at Paris at the time of this extraordinary business, sent the account and copied the will himself from the original. The author prefers giving a translation for the more general benefit of his readers.

An account of two French soldiers, who killed themselves at St. Denis on Christmas-day, 1773.

De la Barre, Monday Morning.

“A very tragical event has just happened near us. On Friday last (Dec. 24, 1773) about eleven o’clock, two soldiers came to an inn at St. Denis and bespoke a dinner for the afternoon. Bourdeaux, one of these soldiers, went out to buy some gunpowder and two bullets. While making the purchase he observed, that St. Denis seemed to him to be so pleasantly situated, that he was determined to pass the remainder of his life in it. He then returned to the inn, and they spent the rest of the day together in great cheerfulness. On Saturday also (being Christmas-day) they were in good spirits, and seemed very merry at their dinner. They called for more wine, and about five o’clock in the evening they were both found dead near the fire, with a table between them, on which were three empty bottles, the will, a letter, and half-a-crown (having previously discharged their bill). They were both shot through the head, and the pistols were lying on the floor. The people of the house being alarmed at the

and the extraordinary compofure with which they accompanied their own murders for no apparent reason, can fcarcely be exceeded or equalled in Englifh ftory; — that as the French are not naturally fubjeft to fo much fpleen and melancholy

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the report of fire-arms, rufhed into the room. Monsieur de Rouilliere, Commandant de la Maréchauffée de St. Denis, who dined with us yefterday, gave us the whole account, and fhewed us the will from which the following was copied.

THE W I L L.

“ A man who is certain, that he fhall quickly die, ought to leave nothing for his furvivors to do, which it is in his own power to fettle beforehand. This fituation is peculiarly ours. It is our intention therefore to prevent all trouble to our landlord, and to render the bufinefs as eafy as poffible to thofe, whom curiofity, under the pretence of form and good-order, may prompt to vifit us. — Humain is the larger man of the two, and I Bourdeaux the fmaller. He is drum-major du Meftre de Camp General des Dragons, and I am a fimple dragon de Belzunce. Death is a paffage. I refer to the Procureur Fifcal and his firft clerk, who will affift him in this inquiry, the principle, which joined to the idea that all things muft have an end, placed thefe piftols in our hands. The future part of our lives affords us an agreeable profpect: but that future muft foon have had an end. Humain is twenty-four years of age; as for myfelf I have feen only four luftres (twenty years). No urgent motive has prompted us to intercept our career of life, except the difguft of exifting here a moment under the idea, that we muft at one time or other ceafe to be. Eternity is the point of re-union, which alone has urged us to anticipate the defpotic aft of fate. In fhort a difguft of life is the only motive, which has induced us to quit it. We have experienced all the pleasures of life, even that of obliging our fellow-creatures. We could ftill enjoy them; but all thofe pleasures muft have an end, which is their poifon. We are tired with this univerfal famenefs. Our curtain is dropped; and we leave our parts to be performed by thofe, who are filly enough to wifh to aft them a few hours longer. A few grains of powder will foon deftroy this mafs of moving flefh, which our proud equals denominate the “ King of Beings.” —Minifters of Juftice! our bodies are at your fervice, as we defpife them too much to be uneafy at their difpofal. —As to our effects, I Bourdeaux leave to Monsieur de Rouilliere, Commandant de la Maréchauffée a St. Denis, my fteel-hilted fword. He will pleafe to remember, that laft year on this very day, he had the kindnefs to pardon at my inftance one of the name of St. Germain, who had offended him. The maid of the inn fhall have my pocket and neck-kerchiefs, my filk ftockings which I have on, and all my other linen. The remainder of our effects will be fufficient to pay the expences of information, and the ufelefs inquiries of law, which will be made about us. The half-crown left on the table will pay for the laft bottle of Champagne, which we are now juft going to drink.” At St. Denis on Chriftnas-day, 1773.

Signed BOURDEAUX,

HUMAIN.

This is the will copied from the original. The letter was directed to Monsieur Delabiere, Officier de Dragons & fon Lieutenant dans Belzunce. Monsieur de Rouilliere went immediately after dinner to convey the bodies to Paris to Monsieur de Sartine. Letters were found in the pockets of Bourdeaux, which proved that he belonged to Auxerre and was of a good family.”

Since

as the English, that source of suicide among the latter is indeed much cut off from the former; and that it is in all probability from the instances of this sort of suicide, that an evil report of the English has spread abroad, without a due consideration, whether the number of self-destroyers on the whole amount and from all causes has been greater or less than that of other nations;—that the laws against suicide in France, being of the same nature with those in England, are also executed in much the same manner, that is generally evaded.

The following is extracted from Mercier [v], who assigns such causes for French suicide, as would scarce have been suffered to have been divulged with

Since receiving the above account the author finds, that this whole story is already in print, being related in a small volume called “Love and Madness” (of which production some account will be given hereafter), in which the letter mentioned above is also added, and is as follows.

“ Sir,

“ During my residence at Guise you honoured me with your friendship. It is time I thank you, “ You have often told me, I appeared displeased with my situation. It was sincere, but not absolutely “ true. I have since examined myself more seriously and acknowledge myself entirely disgusted with “ every state of man, the whole world, and myself. From these discoveries a consequence should be “ drawn;—if disgusted with the whole, renounce the whole. The calculation is not long. I have “ made it without the aid of geometry. In short I am on the point of putting an end to the existence “ that I have possessed for near twenty years; fifteen of which it has been a burden to me; and from “ the moment that I write, a few grains of powder will destroy this moving mass of flesh, which we, “ vain mortals, call the King of Beings. I owe no one an excuse. I deserted: that was a crime; “ but I am going to punish it, and the law will be satisfied. I asked leave of absence from my supe- “ riors, to have the pleasure of dying at my ease. They never condescended to give me an answer. “ This served to hasten my end. I wrote to Bord to send you some detached pieces I left at Guise, “ which I beg you to accept. You will find they contain some well-chosen literature. These pieces “ will solicit for me a place in your remembrance. Adieu, my dear lieutenant! continue your esteem “ for St. Lambert and Dorat. As for the rest skip from flower to flower, and acquire the sweets of “ all knowledge and enjoy every pleasure.

“ Pour moi, j’arrivé au trou

“ Qui n’échappe ni sage, ni fou,

“ Pour aller je ne sçais où.

“ If we exist after this life, and it is forbidden to quit it without permission, I will endeavour to pro- “ cure one moment to inform you of it; if not, I should advise all those, who are unhappy, which is “ by far the greater part of mankind, to follow my example. When you receive this letter, I shall “ have been dead at least twenty-four hours. With esteem, &c.

“ BOURDEAUX.”

[v] Mercier’s *Tableau de Paris*, Vol. II. C. xxiii. Printed at Amsterdam, 1782.

impunity

impunity at the period of their publication, however they would gain their author the highest applause in the year 1789. Mercier was accordingly obliged to secure a safe retreat at the time in Geneva. " Shall I describe (says this writer) the gloomy despair, or shall I say, why the number of suicides in France has increased so much within these five and twenty years? It has been ascribed to our modern [x] philosophy; but "government" is the prevailing cause. The difficulty of procuring a livelihood, the excess of gambling, and the great number of authorized lotteries, are causes also of so many suicides as were scarcely heard of some years ago. Taxes increase and customs are enormous. Trade is restrained or rather exists no more; being overladen with shackles, which oppress and repel it; so that its nutritive branches are dried up and withered. Every thing passes into the hands of the king; money, places, privileges, &c. The farmers-general of the imposts are unmerciful calculators, who like worms prey even on the dead, and give the last blow to a people already oppressed and sinking under a load of accumulated evils. The laws of slavery are fetters on the neck of industry for ever. Those who kill themselves not knowing how to exist are [y] no philosophers; they are poor and indigent people, tired and disgusted with life, because subsistence is grown hard and difficult to procure. When will the purchase of provisions be put into a more easy train? When will the minister, who is like a child attentive to cull the flowers of a tree without caring for its fruit, leave off working to his own destruction? For if the common people have not provisions in plenty, how can the strength, health and fidelity of a nation be depended on? The inhabitants of Paris will be tired of life. The police takes care to conceal from the public the knowledge of suicide. If any one kill himself, the proper officer goes in a private manner and without his robes to the house of the deceased, draws up a verbal

[x] Though Mercier is unwilling to allow any effects to modern French philosophy, yet it certainly has had its share, and that no small one, in the production of suicide. Principles of religion unhinged among the great exert no small influence on the vulgar also. The irreligious contagion spreads through every rank; and as it inclines the great to practise oppression, so it urges the poor to get rid of life without dread of futurity rather than endure those hardships with patience, from which they cannot relieve themselves.

[y] They act however on the same principles as modern philosophers, though ignorant of the name; that when weary of life, they are at liberty to get rid of it; without regarding those principles of religion which forbid it."

“ process without the least bustle, and obliges the priest of the parish to bury
 “ the corpse secretly. They are dragged no more on the hurdle, whom the
 “ simple laws pursue after death. It was besides too dreadful a sight and might
 “ be attended with frightful consequences.—The annual number of suicides [z]
 “ in Paris amount to about one hundred and fifty. There are not so many in
 “ the city of London, though it contains [A] many more inhabitants. Besides
 “ which, the “ nervous” disorder (la consommation), which does not exist at
 “ Paris, is among the English a real malady. After this comparison there is
 “ no need of further observation.—At London it is the rich, who kill them-
 “ selves, because the nervous disorder attacks only the opulent, and because a
 “ rich Englishman is the most capricious of all men and consequently feels the
 “ greatest ennui. At Paris suicide is more common among the lower sorts of
 “ people; and this rash act is mostly committed in garrets or hired lodgings.
 “ A great many now before they kill themselves write a letter to the magistrate,
 “ to avoid all difficulties after their deaths; and this mark of attention is taken
 “ notice of by giving orders for their burying. At Paris no suicide is ever
 “ mentioned in the public papers; and those, who shall write history from these
 “ pages a thousand years hence, will perhaps doubt what I have said. No-
 “ thing however is so true, as that suicide is more common in Paris than in any
 “ other city of the known world [B].”

This

[z] Mercier makes the inhabitants of Paris consist of about one million; and of the environs, about two hundred thousand: but how far his calculations are true, or on what they are founded (as well as his annual number of suicides) the present writer does not pretend to ascertain.—(See MERCIER Vol. II. p. 406.)

[A] This is not true, if Paris contains the number of inhabitants Mercier mentions: since London and its environs are not computed to contain much above eight hundred thousand inhabitants.

[B] If the public prints may be credited, the bishop of Grenoble’s mode of suicide, which he is said in them to have committed in October 1788 was new and ingenious.—He took the rod, on which his bed-curtain hung, and suspended it across by a string which communicated with the trigger of his fowling piece. He then sat gently down, with his feet just hanging over the rod. He put the extremity of the barrel into his mouth, and held it fast there. He had then nothing to do, but to drop his legs upon the rod; the gun went off, and the contents being three bullets went through his head. He was found in that posture a few minutes after.—The cause of his shooting himself was as follows. During the disputes between the king of France and his provincial parliaments, the bishop delivered one of the most free and patriotic speeches (against the king) ever heard in that province:—but he had

it

This practice also abounds in Geneva. The author is enabled to furnish his readers with the following information relative to its state there, which he received from one of the principal citizens and magistrates of that republic.—
 “ The number of inhabitants in our city of Geneva is about twenty-five thousand; and there are about five thousand more in the country-territory. But
 “ very few suicides are perpetrated in the territory, being chiefly inhabited by
 “ country-people, whose passions are much less excited than those of the citizens.”

it printed in a very different manner from what he spoke it. For which reason the gentlemen of the association declared him incapable of presiding over that patriotic assembly.

The following is a remarkable instance of a Frenchman's suicide, though committed in England; and serves to show, how little a man is influenced by any principles of religion, or any just notions of futurity, who determines on this rash and desperate venture, in order to relieve himself from the pressure of some temporal sufferings. The arguments, which this French gentleman uses, have all been noticed in their proper places; and indeed are the common topics used by all in like situations. He seems to have had a desire of prejudicing the English in his favour, by a stretch of politeness extending beyond the grave, even to the resuscitation of his body on English ground, that he might live under English government.

“ On Saturday evening February 14, 1789, a French gentleman seemingly of fashion, committed the desperate act of suicide in Greenwich Park. The following are the particulars that attended this melancholy transaction. He had been at the Ship tavern in Greenwich from Thursday, with a lady and servant. On Saturday morning he sent the lady to town and discharged his servant, at the same time presenting him with his trunk, containing a great quantity of valuables and also two valuable watches. He then called on Sir Hugh Palliser at Greenwich Hospital, offering a sum of money to be distributed among the seamen of the hospital: this however the governor thought proper to decline, alledging that as they wanted for no comfort, his donation in that form would be useless. The gentleman then retired refusing to tell his name. The remainder of Saturday was spent in visiting different inhabitants of Greenwich; among whom he distributed several sums of money to the amount of about 200l; particularly meeting the young gentlemen of an academy, as they were walking, he threw among them eight or nine guineas. This circumstance being made known to the principal of the academy, he was struck with a suspicion of the intended fact, and the gentleman being seen to enter the park, he despatched one of his assistants together with a young gentleman after him. They accordingly crossed him as he walked, entered into conversation with him, and asked him to take tea with them at the academy. He seemed happy to meet with those, who could converse with him in his native language, and acknowledging the politeness of their invitation, pulled out a watch he had still remaining, which he forced on the young gentleman, requesting him to wear it for his sake, and observing that he himself should have no further occasion for it.—Having walked to some distance in the park, his natural politeness led him back part of the way with his companions:—but taking his leave of them before they quitted the park, they had not proceeded far, when they were alarmed with the report of a pistol, and running back found him on the ground and lifeless.—It appeared he had applied

“zens. The average number of suicides in a year within the city (that is of
 “those on whose bodies inquests are regularly taken, as slayers of themselves)
 “is about “eight;” neither does the practice seem to have materially increased
 “or diminished for some time past. Only that I found in the registers, that
 “from the year 1777 to the summer of 1787, more than one hundred suicides
 “have been committed in Geneva;—that two thirds of these unfortunate per-
 “sons were men, this crime being much less common in the other sex;—that
 “few of the clerical order have been known to commit it with us;—that
 “within my observation, it is not particularly the end of an immoral, irre-

a case of pistols to his forehead, by which the roof of his skull was nearly shattered to pieces, which rendered his dissolution instantaneous. The pistols bore the marks of the Gens d’Arms of France on them, by which it may be conjectured he belonged to that corps.—In person he was tall and remarkably handsome, and in manners elegant and polite, so as to impress those, who were witnesses to his behaviour and his fate, with the most lively regret.

The following is a translation of a French letter found upon him, in which he appears not only to have looked death in the face with courage, but even to reason on the propriety of it.

“To all whom it may concern.

“Two hours after mid-day, three hours before my death.

“I think it, Sir, my duty to leave you these lines to prevent inquiries, and solicit your pardon for this
 “embarrassment, and an appropriation of a small piece of ground for my interment. The indifference of
 “my parents, the dislike I had to the profession of an impostor, the perfidy of one tenderly beloved, are the
 “most powerful motives for a sensible soul to prejudge itself, and prefer a grateful dissolution, better or
 “worse. It is not that I was difficult to please or wanted support. If I had preserved my tender love,
 “which heaven seems to have destined to some man to attach him to life, and to make him an object
 “of love; I had not then looked upon the death without trembling, which I now behold with a smile.
 “The tranquillity of my family furnished me with a pretext for retarding my resignation, and in-
 “duced me to come to this distant place for interment. Paris and London have not convinced me, it
 “is more my interest to live than to die; on the contrary, it would be ridiculous to nourish evils with-
 “out hopes of relieving oneself, and which I think every man ought to do as he thinks fit. You
 “say, Sir, I was a fool, which I had much rather be than be wise and suffer. I do not perceive any
 “great advantage in living to eat, to drink and to sleep, for that is the whole train of life: and as
 “sleep is beyond contradiction the greatest blessing, I will take this evening some pills, that will
 “make me sleep a long while.—If the four elements should re-unite and after a thousand combina-
 “tions should form me once more, I would not consent to exist but under the English government,
 “which is excellence itself, and which ought to serve as a model to all nations of the world.—I have
 “seen all, tasted all, but I am not willing to begin life again.”

The Coroner’s Inquest brought in their verdict Lunacy, and the body of this French gentleman was buried at Greenwich; and it has not been discovered who he was.

“ligious,

ligious, and dissipated life, but more generally with us the effect of a mere [c] *tædium vitæ*.—The principal causes of this *tædium vitæ* with us are melancholy and poverty. Alienation of mind (or lunacy properly so called) is not so common a cause. But melancholy, which is the most common, is in fact an alienation of mind; because these melancholy persons enlarge and disfigure objects in their imaginations, and whatever strength of reasoning they may have, they fancy a small evil to be an unsupportable misfortune, and sometimes make evils, which are wholly chimerical. I have seen several persons in that melancholy condition, who, though they have lived very comfortably in every shape, have always been in dread of poverty, and imagining they should live to suffer its horrors. Melancholy is with us, what spleen is with the English.

Several passions also may lead the way to suicide; and this happens at Geneva. But they principally influence those persons born of families, which are subject to melancholy. I say families, because it may be observed, that melancholy is hereditary. We have seen several examples of persons, who have killed themselves in prison to avoid the punishment which threatened them; and of others, who have killed themselves in painful disorders, being not able to bear pain. Suicide is more common at Geneva than in other parts of Switzerland. I do not know if it be the climate, which inclines to melancholy. But if that be not the case, it may be easily conceived, that our city being the most trading one of Switzerland, and perhaps the most learned, passions have more occasion to be displayed and disappointments are more frequent; that we are more difficult with regard to happiness, and that the quiet and equal life, which shepherds lead, differs much from the cares and solitudes of a citizen. It may also be conceived, that

[c] A remarkable instance of this kind is related in what follows. “Since I came here (to Geneva) a sudden and unaccountable fit of despair seized the son of one of the most wealthy and respectable citizens of the republic. This young gentleman had in appearance every reason to be satisfied with his life. He was handsome and in the vigour of youth; married to a woman of excellent character, who had brought him a good fortune, and by whom he was the father of a fine child. In the midst of all these blessings, surrounded by every thing, which could inspire a man with an attachment to life, he felt it insupportable; and without any obvious cause of chagrin determined to destroy himself. Having passed some hours with his mother, a most desirable woman, and with his wife and child, he left them in apparent good humour, went into another room, applied the muzzle of a musket to his forehead, thrust back the trigger with his toe, and blew out his brains, in the hearing of the unsuspecting company he had just left.”—Dr. Moore’s Travels through Switzerland, &c. Vol. I. Let. xxxii.

“our

“ our city having several branches of its industry precarious, it often happens, that the workmen are reduced to poverty by having nothing to do. Thus we have a large manufacture of printed and painted linens; which very often employs a great number of persons, and at other times very few. The business also of the jeweller and goldsmith is very precarious; from whence the same consequence ensues, and on this account poverty and distress beget suicide.

“ The last example which happened this year, was that of a watch-maker, who had lived a long while in easy circumstances by his work; but growing indolent and careless, he saw himself surpassed in his business by others, and his former degree of affluence considerably diminished. He was a poet also and a wit; two qualities, which no doubt contributed to his ruin. He wrote a treatise previous to his death, in which he attempted to prove, that he was not guilty of killing himself before God under his present circumstances. I have seen his verses and other works. His papers show that he was of a very amorous complexion, consumed with pride, and a truly singular character.”

It seems from hence, that there is a great similarity in one cause of much self-destruction in Geneva and England, viz. in that of melancholy or spleen, which borders on lunacy, drives to despair, and terminates in suicide: and it will appear from what follows, that England seems to have no claim to a pre-eminence in this bloody business over the citizens of Geneva any more than over those of Paris.

The present writer would have spared no pains in endeavouring to furnish his readers with an average account of the annual number of suicides in England (that is of those whose cases came under legal cognisance) had he not found so little probability of obtaining any exact and accurate information. The only mode of procuring it seemed to be from the records of inquisitions usually (though not always regularly) preserved by every coroner in the kingdom in his own private office; but which not being properly official papers do not descend to their successors; and therefore, if a coroner has been but a short time in office, he can furnish but little account of the matter. When the reader is moreover informed, that most counties have several coroners for the county at

large, and every city and town-corporate in the kingdom its own coroner, he will scarce wonder, that the author declined both the labour and the expence of undertaking so arduous a business, as collecting reports from such a numerous body of men, many of whom perhaps would for various reasons have refused a compliance with his request, and thus have rendered the collective account very imperfect. But what is more especially to the purpose, these reports, even supposing them faithfully collected, must have been greatly inadequate to the main point in view, viz. determining the "actual" number of suicides in the kingdom within any given period. For the imperfection of such a public account will be easily allowed, when it is considered, that in such lists the only information transmitted would have been of the number of inquisitions taken in a given term of years in cases of sudden death, on which verdicts either of lunacy or *felo de se* had been found. Thus numbers, who perhaps did voluntarily drown, or shoot, or poison, or put themselves to death in any mode, which from its attendant circumstances purposely so contrived might render the intention of the party doubtful, would be excluded from this calculation, as coming under the verdict of "accidental death or per infortunium." To which if there be added many actual self-murderers, the manner of whose death is never referred to a coroner's jury at all, but is hushed up from all public notoriety by the friends of the deceased, it must be apparent, that a small proportion of the real truth could be obtained from such a general statement, grounded only on inquisitions taken before coroners. Still less could any judgment be formed from the verdicts of a coroner's jury, concerning the proportion of innocent and guilty suicide; since for reasons assigned in the last chapter, humanity to the deceased or his family so generally prevails over strict truth and justice.—However, what information has been collected on the present occasion shall now be communicated; which though far from complete towards determining the point in hand, may yet serve as a sort of ground-work, on which to raise a large additional superstructure, without fear of encumbering or overloading the foundation of truth.

It appears from accounts, which the author has obtained from the coroners of the metropolis,—“ That the average number of inquisitions which have
“ been taken on the bodies of suicides from what cause soever within the last
“ twenty-eight years, has been about “ thirty-two” each year in London,
“ South-

“ Southwark, and Westminster. How many or rather how very few have
 “ been the verdicts of *felo de se*, the author is not at liberty to declare; nor
 “ any other particulars indeed, except that the “ gloomy months” are totally
 “ exonerated from all extraordinary burden of this crime above those of a
 “ more serene and enlivening temperature.”

The following particulars are collected from the accounts with which the author has been favoured by the several coroners in the county of Kent. “ That
 “ the average number of suicides on whose bodies inquisitions have been taken
 “ for the last [D] eighteen years, has been upwards of “ thirty-two” each year;
 “ —that out of the whole number for eighteen years (amounting to five hundred and eighty) “ sixteen” only have been adjudged felones *de se*, and all
 “ the rest lunatics;—that out of the whole number “ three-fourths” have destroyed themselves by the mode of hanging;—that the proportion of males
 “ to females has been about “ two-thirds” of the former;—that no one season or month of the year can be charged with its actual commission above
 “ another [E];—nor has any one year in the above period been more particularly
 “ distinct-

[D] The average number of years collected from the different accounts of the Kentish coroners is, eighteen, as twenty-eight was of the coroners of the metropolis.

[E] However, the supposed influence of the gloom of November towards the production of much suicide, has been happily arrested and worked up with great poetic propriety and energy by the writer of the following beautiful Ode.—The author of this work makes no doubt but the public will join with him in returning thanks to the “ Lady,” who wrote it, for the liberty she has given him of introducing a composition of so much genius and merit to their notice. He is only sorry, that he has not the further liberty of declaring her name.

THE PROGRESS OF NOVEMBER. AN ODE.

I.

Now yellow autumn's leafy ruins lie
 In faded splendor on the desert plain,
 Far from the noise of madding crowds I fly
 To wake in solitude the mytic strain:
 A theme of import high I dare to sing,
 While fate impels my hand to strike the trembling string.

Bright

"distinguished by its practice than another;—that "one hundred" more in-
 "quisitions

II.

Bright on my harp the meteors gleam,
 As glancing through the night they shine;
 Now the winds howl, the ravens scream,
 And yelling ghosts the chorus join:
 Chimeras dire from fancy's deepest hell
 Fly o'er yon hallowed tower, and toll the passing bell.

III.

November hears the dismal sound,
 As slow advancing from the pole,
 He leads the months their wintry round:
 The blackening clouds attendant roll,
 Where frown a giant-band, the sons of care,
 Dark thoughts, prefages fell, and comfortless despair,

IV.

O'er Britain's isle they spread their wings,
 And shades of death dimmy the land;
 November wide his mantle flings,
 And lifting high his vengeful hand,
 Hurls down the demon spleen; with pow'rs combined
 To check the springs of life, and crush th' enfeebled mind.

V.

Thus drear dominion he maintains,
 Beneath a cold inclement sky,
 While noxious fogs, and drizzling rains
 On nature's sickening bosom lie:
 The opening rose of youth untimely fades,
 And hope's fair friendly light beams dimly through the shades.

VI.

Now prowls abroad the ghastly fiend
 "Fell Suicide;"—whom phrensy bore,
 His brows with writhing serpents twined
 His mantle steeped in human gore.
 The livid flames around his eye-balls play,
 Stern horror stalks before, and death pursues his way.

"quisitions have been taken on the bodies of suicides in the latter nine years
than

VII.

Hark ! is not that the fatal stroke ?—
See where the bleeding victim lies !
The bonds of social feeling broke,
Dismayed the frantic spirit flies.
Creation starts, and shrinking nature views,
Appall'd, the blow which Heaven's first rights subdues.

VIII.

Behold, the weight of woes combined
A "woman" has the pow'r to scorn ;
Her infant race to shame consign'd,
A name disgraced, a fortune torn,
She meets resolved : and combating despair,
Supports alone the ills a "coward" durst not share,

IX.

On languor, luxury, and pride,
The subtle fiend employs his spell ;
Where selfish fordid passions bide ;
Where weak impatient spirits dwell ;
Where thought oppressive from itself would fly,
And seek relief from time, in dark eternity.

X.

Far from the scenes of guilty death
My wearied spirit seeks to rest,—
Why sudden stops my struggling breath ?
Why throbs so strong my aching breast ?
Hark ! sounds of horror sweep the troubled glade,
Far on a whirlwind borne, the fatal month is fled.

XI.

I watched his flight, and saw him bear
To Saturn's orb the sullen band ;
There winter chills the lingering year,
And gloom eternal shades the land :
On a lone rock, far in a stormy main,
In cheerless prison pent, I heard the ghosts complain.

“ than were in the former nine ; consequently that suicide is an increasing evil
 “ in the [F] county of Kent.”

The metropolis is supposed to contain at least eight-hundred-thousand inhabitants, and the county of Kent about two-hundred-thousand. It appears then, as far as the records of the coroners can direct us, that the number of suicides are nearly equal in both ; from whence it should seem to follow, that in proportion to the number of inhabitants, the practice in question is four times greater in the county of Kent than in the metropolis. Now as this is a calculation, which can scarce be admitted as true, it will be worth while to endeavour to account for this great redundancy, which appears on the records of the Kentish coroners, when compared with those of their brethren in the metropolis.

In the first place it may be observed, that on account of the vicinity of this county to the metropolis, a number of suicides are known to be committed in it (and which consequently will be registered in the county) whose perpetrators' usual residence was in London, where they imbibed all their notions of suicide, as well as their immediate reasons for its practice. Such therefore ought in truth to swell the London rather than the country lists. But though it be impossible to ascertain this matter with any accuracy, yet it will be allowed to be one evident cause of an “ apparent” increase of suicide in the county, of which a certain proportion, and that probably a large one, in strict truth and justice appertains to the metropolis.

XII.

Some pow'r unseen denies my verse

The hallow'd veil of fate to rend :

Now sudden blasts the sounds disperse,

And fancy's inspirations end :

While rushing winds in wild discordance jar,

And winter calls the storms around his icy car.

[F] If it be permitted to make a rough calculation of the number of suicides in all England, on whose bodies inquisitions are taken and the verdict of lunacy or *felo de se* found, from the proportion of its inhabitants to those of Kent, they amount to near “ one thousand” every year ; independent of those, whose bodies are never brought before a coroner at all, or who are sheltered from public notoriety under the verdict of “ accidental” death.—This is reckoning six millions of inhabitants in England, after those of London and Kent (about one million) are deducted. Neither is there any reason to suppose they are not increasing all over England, as much as they are found to do in Kent.

Again;—a comparative paucity of inhabitants necessarily connects the individuals of which it is composed with each other;—consequently the whole mode of each other's life, and particularly any extraordinary action must be better known and more discussed in a country-town or village than in a large and over-grown city. In this latter the inhabitants seldom enter into the concerns of their near neighbours, scarce know who they are, or trouble themselves about any of their actions, in which they themselves have no immediate interest. When a man destroys himself in a country-town or village, it is next to impossible to conceal the matter from the knowledge of his neighbours. Hence it may easily be conceived, that scarce a suicide can be perpetrated in a country-place or small town, which is not regularly brought before a coroner's jury; since an outcry would immediately be raised against an omission of that kind; and the minister or parish-officers having once had their suspicions raised, would not easily be induced to proceed to christian burial without proper authority. But how different from this is the case in the metropolis! and how easy is it to conceal a crime of this nature so as to prevent its ever becoming a subject of legal inquiry! And as the friends of the deceased will naturally be inclined to do so in many cases, the assertion can scarce be deemed an offence against truth, which maintains, that the bodies of many actual suicides in the metropolis are never submitted to the inspection of a jury;—and this without any blame on the proper officer, who cannot be supposed to know any thing of the matter. This cause, which though it cannot from its nature be brought to proof, may with much reason be concluded to exist, will account for another share of the “apparent” inequality and great excess of country above town-suicide:—a sudden death in the former must almost always be known and brought to legal inquisition, but in the latter may be, and no doubt very often is, concealed from public notice.

It appears further from the above accounts, that “hanging” is by far the most usual mode of self-destruction in the country; since not less than “three-fourths” of the whole number of suicides in the county of Kent during the last eighteen years have adopted that mode. The writer is not empowered to speak from authority, as to the most prevalent mode of self-murder in the metropolis, but he ventures to maintain, that a great share of it is perpetrated by other methods than hanging, and those less necessarily determinate of the intention of the

the party. As London-suicides are so frequently people of fortune, rank and consequence—"such" disdain application to the ignoble halter on these desperate services, preferring a more gentleman-like [G] exit by means of the sword or pistol. The circumstance of so much suicide by hanging in the country indicates, that its propensity there chiefly exists among those of low or middling rank; indeed such are the generality of its fixed inhabitants. Hence it may be observed, that though the verdict will be generally favourable, yet less pains will be taken to avoid "all" legal process in full form on the body of one of middling degree than of superior station; since the deference paid to rank in "life" will be extended even beyond "death." From whence also it may be inferred, that suicide, being much oftener committed by people of rank in London than in the country, will oftener be concealed from public observation in the former than in the latter, and no account taken of it; which also tends to diminish the true number of suicides on the lists of the London officers; and this without fault of their own, as they must be supposed to be unacquainted with the matter.

Hanging also discovering in the nature of its process strong marks of being altogether voluntary, the verdict lunacy at least can scarce ever be avoided; whereas when the pistol is used, there is room for the supposed interference of "accident" or unintentional discharge; and no doubt many a real self-murderer's death has been adjudged "accidental," because it could not clearly be proved to be otherwise. But as the use of the pistol is much more frequent in town than in the country, it is not to be denied, but there is great probability of many more cases of real self-murder being brought in "accidental" death in town than in the country; which is another cause tending to bring the numbers in each more on a level than they appear to be from the reports of the coroners. The case of voluntary "drowning" too may indeed appear accidental either in town or country; but as all attendant circumstances are generally more known in the latter, truth is more likely to have place; especially as the favourable verdict of lunacy is almost sure to follow. But as the number of accidental deaths (as by verdict brought in) must be great amid great popu-

[G] The author recollects a story he has heard related of one gentleman of consequence remarking on another gentleman's suicide by hanging, "What a low-minded wretch to apply to the halter! Had he shot himself like a gentleman I could have forgiven him."—See more of professional modes of suicide towards the end of the next chapter.

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lousness, it is more than probable (where the circumstances were at all doubtful and would therefore be deemed accidental) that a proportion of them is really due to the calculation of suicide, and therefore ought to be set against the country-lists. In many modes of suicide then the number of "accidental" verdicts in cases of real suicide is likely to be much greater in London than in the country, from the number of doubtful cases being of necessity so much greater. From all which circumstances it is easy to conceive, why there should be a great probability, that the records of the coroners in the metropolis will furnish a much smaller number of inquisitions on suicide than those of the country. Much suicide must necessarily be concealed from the officers of justice, as well as other kinds of sudden and violent death. It is no one's interest to inform against it; neither is there any punishment incurred nor mischief done to another by a failure of discovery. No wonder therefore, that it will always be concealed as much as possible by the sorrowing friends. But where is the place of equal advantage for the concealment of every misdemeanour, as amid the busy scenes and [H] concourse of the metropolis?

But if attention moreover be paid to the flagrant causes of modern suicide, it is almost impossible to suppose, that an excess of it should really exist in the country, above what is to be found in that spot, where all those causes flourish and concentrate. If disappointed passions lead, as they do, to such frequent self-murder, where is there more food for their rage than in the jarring pursuits and interests of the metropolis? If dissipation tend to poverty and distress, to despair and suicide, where are its profuse scenes to be indulged like as in the metropolis? If gambling be the fruitful source of so much voluntary slaughter, where are its temptations exhibited and its deceits practised with such zeal and perseverance, as in the metropolis? Lastly, if this daring crime must at all times receive its principal encouragement from a defiance of all that is serious and virtuous, from an overturning all awe and reverence for the Deity, and all dread of future prospects;—where, where is such an open and general contempt of all religious principles discovered, as in the metropolis? It cannot be, but that certain causes will have certain effects, and produce a number of suicides

[H] It is also to be noticed in favour of concealment of suicide in the metropolis, that there is only one coroner for London and Southwark, and another for Westminster, but not fewer than seventeen for the county of Kent.

propor-

proportioned to the number of inhabitants; nay even in an increased ratio, as those numbers are drawn into a small comparative compass; whereby both the opportunities of vice and the contagion of evil example act with redoubled energy. It cannot be from the experience of all ages, but that as an overgrown capital must abound itself, so it must set example to the country in every species of dissipation, profligacy and vice. But that country in imbibing its principles has also imitated its practice; and it is determined on the surest grounds (viz. from the number of inquisitions actually taken) that there has been a considerable increase of late years in the perpetration of self-murder. This should at least warn the country of its own evil proceedings, without endeavouring to shelter itself under the example and predominancy of vice conspicuous in the capital.

Another particular is to be learned from the above accounts, which respects the comparative state of suicide in England and Geneva. If we take the London-account, as it stands in the coroner's lists, of about thirty-two each year out of eight-hundred-thousand inhabitants, and compare it with the Geneva-account of the same nature, being eight each year [1] out of twenty-five-thousand inhabitants, the proportion of suicide in Geneva is eight times greater than that in London;—a proportion which can scarce be credited. This therefore is a further proof, that the calculation of actual suicide in London cannot be made with the least degree of precision from the number of inquisitions taken by coroners. The inhabitants of Kent are stated at about two-hundred-thousand; and the annual number of suicides, according to inquisitions taken, at thirty-two; which makes the proportion of Genevan to Kentish suicide as two to one: this proportion, all circumstances considered, cannot be supposed to exceed the truth. But though the honour of the county must needs be vindicated from having four times as much suicide committed in it, as there is in the metropolis (which it appears to have from the inquisitions of coroners, and which would make Geneva bear the proportion to London of eight to one); yet the conclusion seems just, that more suicide in proportion to its number of inha-

[1] It must be presumed, that the same causes act in Geneva as in England, towards "keeping down" the apparent number of suicides; and that therefore "eight" is only the ostensible number in their registers, as "thirty-two" is in London; but that neither comes near the truth as to the actual frequency of the crime. Were not this the case, there would have been no pretence for a notoriety of its practice in either place.

bitants is annually committed in Geneva than in London: which is sufficient to free this island from the imputation under which it has so long laboured, of producing more self-murder than any other [κ] nation. It appears also from the account given above of Geneva-suicide, that it is also an increasing evil there, as well as in England; since though eight are said to be the average-number of suicides in former years, yet that the last ten years exhibit on the registers a list of one hundred suicides, which is ten a year. The same proportion of male and female suicide prevails in both countries.—But leaving these calculations in which accuracy is neither attainable nor of much importance, those causes shall be traced out in the following chapter, which furnish their joint concurrence to the production of so much suicide in this island, as is sufficient, if not superlatively, yet emphatically, to brand it with a dreadful propensity towards its commission.

C H A P. V.

Particular causes concurring to suicide in England opened.—Whatever destroys equanimity of temper tends towards suicide.—English not famous for equanimity; soon elated or depressed.—Causes productive of unevenness of temper, of low spirits, melancholy, and suicide.—Climate.—Animal food.—Spirituous liquors.—Tea.—Coal.—Habits of idleness and sedentary employments produce ill-health, nervous affections, &c. ending in melancholy and lunacy.—Strong constitutions may hold out, but delicate ones will suffer from the above causes.—Nervous affections the worst and most desperate of all human disorders, and end often in melancholic suicide.—From their frequency styled the “English Malady.”—Causes of suicide from the peculiar character of the English.—Firmness.—Fickleness.—Impatient alike of

[κ] “Suicide is very frequent at Geneva. I am told this has been the case ever since the oldest people of the republic can remember; and there is reason to believe, that it happens oftener here (“he is writing from Geneva”) in proportion to the number of inhabitants than in England or any other country of Europe. The multiplicity of instances, which have occurred since I have been here is astonishing.”—Dr. MOORE’S Travels through Switzerland, &c. Vol. I. Lett. xxxii.

prosperity

prosperity and adversity; neither of which they bear with temper.—Enmity of the English.—High contempt of death.—Refinement of principle.—Quick sensibility joined with gravity of temper.—Great degree of constitutional liberty a source of impatience and suicide.—Whimsical and professional modes of suicide.—Remarks on above causes.—The abomination of self-murder seated in infidelity and licentiousness of manners; and in these and their fatal consequences our island abounds.—Concluding reflections.

IT may be laid down as a general maxim, that a certain equanimity of temper equally removed from the points of excessive exaltation or depression of spirits, is the least liable to urge its possessor to the commission of suicide. If it be asked, “ what can an extraordinary share of vivacity or exhilaration of the “ spirits have to do with suicide ? ” it may readily be answered, that as well from the imbecillity of the human frame and constitution, which is not able to sustain a perpetual exertion or violent flow of spirits, as from the numberless scenes of imprudence, extravagance, and vice, into which high spirits so often inveigle their possessor, and which frequently end in a course of time in repentant distraction and despair;—that from these causes, the point of violent depression in those most famed for the exuberance of their spirits at a certain time of life, does often on the whole, and before their days are finished, exceed the point of exhilaration; and thus even an uncommon share of vivacity may prepare its own way for the commission of suicide.

Now the English are great strangers to that equanimity of temper, which preserves the mind [L] calm in adversity and composed in prosperity, and which is a mark of true fortitude and wisdom; insomuch that their national impatience is remarked by all foreigners. Their versatility of temper is very observable; a trifle elates, a trifle depresses them, and they are apt to be extreme both in their joys and sorrows. But as more causes of [M] dejection than joyfulness usually

[L] *Æquam memento rebus in arduis
Servare mentem; non secus in bonis
Ab infolenti temperatam
Lætitiâ. ————— Hor.*

[M] It was Dr. Johnson's opinion, that the evils of human life preponderated against its enjoyments; and this opinion he would enforce (as some of his biographers remark) by an observation of the general

usually intervene, the former is the extreme to which they are most liable, and which leads them into melancholy, despair and suicide. Whatever therefore tends to destroy this desirable equanimity of temper, tends also to "prepare" the mind under a proper combination of circumstances for the perpetration of self-murder. An inquiry then shall be made into the causes, which are generally supposed to exert their influence over an Englishman's constitution, and which, by disturbing the serenity of his temper, tend to depress his spirits, and thus incline him to tread in those paths of melancholy and despair, which lead to self-destruction.

The first point that occurs for consideration is the nature of that climate, in which an Englishman breathes; how far it is capable of affecting his health and constitution, and what may be its influence towards debilitating the animal economy, depressing the spirits, and thus urging to a languor and weariness of life? It would be a waste of time to set about proving so plain a point, as that various climes produce various effects on the human constitution; and that the peculiar tone and habit of the body exerts a powerful influence in exalting or depressing the vigour of the mind. Now what the inhabitants of other regions, who enjoy a more constant and settled atmosphere only can feel by travelling into different countries, the inhabitants of this island experience to a certain degree, at different times, by abiding in their own: and though they can never be said to suffer the extremes of heat or cold, yet they are often sensible of changes more sudden, and therefore more trying to the constitution, than they are who constantly live in a burning or frozen region. For these frequent vicissitudes of weather must needs have a great effect on the habit of body; and though a stout and robust constitution may withstand their attacks, yet they must be severely felt by invalids. It is well known, how much the spirits of Englishmen depend on the gloom or sunshine of the day; and how, like

use of narcotics in all parts of the world; as in the eastern and southern countries, of opium; in the western and northern, of spirituous liquors and tobacco; and into this principle he resolved most of the temptations to ebriety. He has been heard also to remark, that since the disuse of "smoking" among the better sort of people, suicide has been more frequent in this country than before.

It is presumed, that the principle on which Dr. Johnson could maintain, that smoking was a preventive of suicide must be, that the "composedness" of a pipe, when a man was in the habit of using one, tended much to blunt the keen edge of distress and sorrow.

vanes,

vaned, they veer with the wind through every point of exhilaration and depression. An atmosphere therefore so remarkable as our own for its variableness, and which is so often and so suddenly changed from clearness and serenity into moisture and thick vapour, must be the occasion of much change in the tone of the human body, and cause an uneven and irregular flow of the animal spirits. When a man is troubled with splenetic and atrabilarious disorders, it is usual to say, he is "vapourish;"—a metaphorical expression plainly derived from the influence, which the exhalations or vapours of the air are supposed to exert over the health and spirits. A pure air contributes to the health of the body, the serenity of the mind, and the exertion of all the mental faculties: all which are so many obstacles in the way of suicide. A moist air on the contrary obstructs perspiration and promotes putrefaction; it generates nervous and all other disorders, debilitates the human frame, and fetters down the powers of the understanding: but all this tends to depress the spirits, to nourish melancholy [N] and to terminate in suicide. The nature of our climate then, by often bringing us into a low and debilitated state of body and mind, or by acting powerfully on such constitutions, as are already weakened by other disorders, contributes much to engender that listlessness and melancholy, which is the parent of such [o] frequent suicide.

Another cause destructive of equanimity of temper, and apt to occasion an uneven flow of spirits, and particularly in making them sink towards the point of depression, is the large use of gross and animal food, of which the Englishman's daily consumption is greater than that of most other nations. Animal

[N] "A moist air is less suited than a dry one to absorb the effluvia of bodies, particularly of the human body, as the perspiratory and pulmonary discharges. It also promotes the putrefaction of animal and vegetable substances. Hence may be derived in some measure the effects of a moist air on the mind and intellects. The sound state of the mind, as well as the health of the body, is nearly connected with the freedom and regularity of perspiration; and the obstruction of this discharge is generally attended with low spirits. The obstruction therefore which a moist air gives to perspiration, is a presumption, that it is unfavourable to the powers of the mind and understanding."—FALCONER'S Remarks on the Influence of Climate on the Manners, &c. 4to. B. I. C. xxiii.

[o] ————— "A breath * thou art
Servile to all the skiey influence."

SHAKESPEARE, Measure for Measure.

* Meaning life.

A a a 2

food

food abounds more in strong nutritive juices than vegetable. When taken therefore in too great plenty, it will occasion a redundancy of nourishment, by which the vessels will be distended, a load will be laid on the digestive organs of the body, and a plethora will ensue, which must either be carried off by violent exercise, or by the efforts of nature in the crisis of a fever. But as frequent sickness weakens and impairs the general state of the health and constitution, so it tends to destroy an equanimity of temper, to cause uneasy and fretful sensations, to produce disgust at life, impatience and despondency. Yet further, as if the "quality" of the food itself, when largely taken, were not sufficient to disorder the human frame, every provocative that rich and poignant sauces can excite, or the exquisite exertion of the culinary art can suggest, is added to stimulate the appetite, and thus increase the "quantity." The difficulty of digestion is hereby completed; our food is not easily assimilated; and we all experience at times the ill effects of imposing too hard a task on our digestive faculties, by that complication of disorders, by that languor and [P] dejection of spirits, which follows on these oppressions and crudities of the stomach.— "Do you wonder (says Seneca) that diseases are innumerable?—number the "cooks [Q]."

Another cause highly tending to destroy all equanimity of temper is to be drawn from an excessive use of strong and spirituous liquors. These sorts of cordials are known to be latent poisons, which may exhilarate for a time, but which depress for ever after. They even lose their short enlivening quality by frequent

[P] ————— corpus onustum

Hesternis vitiis animum quoque prægravat una. —Hor.

[Q] It is trusted, that the learned reader will not be displeased at the following quotation from Seneca, Ep. xcv. where is more to the same purpose.

Non est mirum medicinam tunc minus negotii habuisse firmis adhuc solidisque corporibus & facili cibo nec per artem voluptatemque corrupto. Qui (cibus) postquam cæpit non ad tollendam, sed ad irritandam famem quæri; & inventæ sunt mille condituræ, quibus aviditas excitaretur; quæ desiderantibus alimenta erant, onera sunt plenius. Inde pallor & nervorum tremor, & miserabilior ex cruditatibus quàm ex fame macies. Inde incerti labantium pedes & semper qualis in ipsâ ebrietate titubatio. Inde in totam cutem humor admixtus distentusque venter, dum male assuecit plus capere quàm poterat. Inde suffusio luridæ bilis & decolor vultus tabesque in se putrescentium, & nervorum sine sensu jacentium torpor, aut palpitatio sine intermissione vibrantium. Quid capitis vertigines dicam? Quid oculorum auriumque tormenta & cerebri æstuantis verminationes & omnia per quæ exoneramur, internis

frequent repetition, and then nothing is left but to increase their quantity, or to sink under the evil effects of the preceding bad habit. But this increase operates in proportion in its counter-part of dejection, till the brain must either be kept in a constant fever little short of actual phrensy, or be subject to all the wretchedness of depression and melancholy—the parent of frequent suicide. There is not perhaps a more false maxim than that the use of wine or stronger liquors tends “upon the whole” to exhilarate the spirits. The most that can be urged in their favour is, that the use of them may produce in certain dispositions a degree of present conviviality, which may be pleasant in the social hour; but for which the temporary possessor pays a dear purchase in his own retirement; since whatever is wound up like a piece of clock-work, must go down also at its limited period [R].

There is another liquor of a very different nature from spirits, which is in great esteem amongst us, and which is thought by many to have great influence in debilitating the nervous system, and of consequence in promoting lowness and dejection of spirits, and that is “Tea;” of which the reader may take the following account in the words of Dr. Falconer (B. V. C. ii.) “Tea from “the best experiments (see Dr. Lettsom’s essay on this subject) produces sedative

internis ulceribus affecta? Innumerabilia præterea febrium genera, aliarum impetu subeuntium, aliarum tenui peste repentium, aliarum cum horrore & multâ membrorum quassatione venientium? Quid alios referam innumerabiles morbos, supplicia luxuriæ? Immunes erant ab istis malis, qui nondum se deliciis solvant; qui sibi imperabant, sibi administrabant. Corpora operâ ac vero labore durabant, aut cursu defatigati aut venatu aut tellure versata, excipiebat illos cibus, qui nisi esurientibus placere non poterat. Itaque nihil opus erat tam magnâ medicorum suppellectile, nec tot fermentis atque pixidibus. Simplex erat ex simplici causâ valetudo; multos morbos multa fercula fecerunt. Vide quantum rerum per unam gulam transitarum permiserat luxuria, terrarum marisque vastatrix.—Innumerabiles esse morbos miraris?—Coquos numera.

[R] “Wine passes off quickly, prevents loading the stomach and powers of digestion. Malt liquors for want of a “stimulus” are nearly equally oppressive with animal food. Wine and spirituous liquors differ much from each other. Distilled spirits want the acid of wines (which either does not rise or is destroyed in the distillation) and therefore they remain longer in the body, and are more inflammatory. They are also more narcotic and produce worse effects upon the nervous system in debilitating it than wine. They are likewise destitute of fixible air, to which wine in a great measure owes its invigorating and cheering qualities; but which is destroyed or dissipated in the distillation of spirits. Hence their effects upon the intellects are less happy than those of wine.”—FALCONER, B. V. C. i. and ii.

“effects

" effects upon the nerves, diminishes their energy and the tone of the muscular
 " fibres, and induces a considerable degree both of sensibility and irritability on
 " the whole system. It also promotes the thinner evacuations very powerfully,
 " and diminishes the flesh and bulk of those, who use it. These effects tend
 " to impair the strength and to promote the above consequences on the nervous
 " system. Hence the use of tea has been found very agreeable to the studious.
 " But I believe with us it has had the effect of enfeebling and enervating the
 " bodies of the people, and of introducing several disorders that arise from
 " laxity and debility; and has been of still more consequence in making way
 " for the use of spirituous liquors, which are often taken to relieve that de-
 " pression, which tea occasions. It evidently injures the health by the effects
 " it produces on the nerves, contributes to abate courage, vigour and steadiness
 " of mind. Tea (as a plant) belongs to the natural order of the Coadunatæ,
 " which are all of the narcotic kind [s]." Other physicians however speak
 differently of the effects of tea, and think, that where it apparently does not
 agree, it is because the habit of body is "already" enervated; and that even
 then, it is the warm water, which is more prejudicial than the tea. It is ac-
 knowledged on all hands, that nervous disorders have very much increased of
 late years, but that they may be ascribed to many other causes more hurtful in
 every point of view than the introduction of tea; such are among others,
 dissipated luxury, high seasoned viands, spirituous liquors, effeminate modes of
 life and irregular hours.

To these distant causes of suicide arising from climate and diet, some also add
 that of our principal fuel, "Coal;" whose sulphureous exhalations are supposed
 to be very prejudicial to a weak and relaxed state of the body, and which we use
 in more abundance than many other nations.

But since spirits depressed (from whatever cause) naturally shrink from ex-
 ertion, the foregoing causes may unite in producing an indolence and inactivity
 of temper, a love of sedentary rather than active employments; from whence
 the origin of many bodily disorders may be traced, which center in nervous

[s] "The Japanese (adds Falconer) are great tea-drinkers, and subject from its use to the diabetes
 and consumptive disorders resembling the atrophy."

affections, in weakness, lowness, melancholy, and that species of lunacy, which gives birth to such frequent suicide.

Now it is not meant to be asserted, that these general causes exert an influence on every individual alike, but that there must be [T] a previous aptitude in the frame and contexture of the body to receive such and such impressions. The strong habit of body will resist all sudden changes of atmosphere, will throw off all oppressions of redundant food by violent exercise, and live in health and vigour amid many engines of malady: but let the same causes work on one

[T] "It is a common observation (and I think a just one) that fools, weak or stupid persons, heavy and dull souls, are seldom much troubled with vapours or lowness of spirits. The intellectual faculty, without all manner of doubt, has material and animal organs, by which it mediately works, as well as the animal functions. What they are and how they operate, as, I believe, very few know, so it is very little to our purpose to inquire. The works of imagination and memory, of study, thinking and reflecting, from whatever source the principle on which they depend, springs, must necessarily require bodily organs. Some have these organs finer, quicker, more agile and sensible, and perhaps more numerous than others. It is evident that in nervous distempers, and in many other bodily diseases, these faculties and their operations are impaired, nay totally ruined and extinguished to all appearance; and yet by proper remedies and after recovery of health, they are restored and brought to their former state. Now since this present age (n. b. Cheyne's book was published 1733) has made efforts to go beyond former times in all the arts of ingenuity, invention, study, learning, and all the contemplative and sedentary professions (I speak only here of our own times and of the better sort, whose chief employments and studies these are) the organs of these faculties being thereby worn and spoiled, must affect and deaden the whole system, and lay a foundation for the diseases of lowness and weakness. Add to this, that those who are likeliest to excel and apply in this manner, are most capable and most in hazard of following that way of life, which I have mentioned, as the likeliest to produce these diseases.—"Great wits" are generally "great epicures," at least men of "taste." And the bodies and constitutions of one generation, are still more corrupt, infirm and diseased than those of a former, as they advance in time and the use of the causes assigned."—CHEYNE'S English Malady. P. I. C. vi.

Cheyne observes also in his Advertisement to Part III, "the disease of low spirits is as much a bodily distemper, (as I have demonstrated) as the small-pox or a fever; and the truth is, it seldom and I think never happens nor can happen to any, but those of the liveliest and quickest natural parts, whose faculties are the brightest and most spiritual (full of spirits) and whose genius is most keen and penetrating, and particularly where there is the most delicate sensation and taste, both of pleasure and pain. So equally are the good and bad things of this mortal state distributed. For I seldom or ever observed a heavy, dull, earthy, clod-pated clown much troubled with "nervous" disorders, or at least not to any eminent degree; and I scarce believe the thing possible from the animal economy and the present laws of nature."

N. B. These opinions of Cheyne are left with the reader to comment on as he pleases.

of delicate and tender "stamina" of life, and they will produce a series of the most dreadful disorders that are incident to human nature,—the excess of low spirits and nervous affections.

Again; let the same man be at one time robust and full of sanguine health; and at another relaxed and vapourish, debilitated and nervous, he will in the former case exert a manliness and fortitude in enduring the misfortunes and afflictions of life; in the latter he will become a prey to idle apprehensions and imaginary evils, which will act on his mind with more violence than real ones do on others, and give him up to the tortures of melancholy and despair. Men are known to covet the very dregs of life, while labouring under the pain of the acutest disorders, such as gout, stone, &c. but when once attacked by these (as Cheyne calls them) "sinking, suffocating, and strangling" nervous affections, they are thrown at once into inevitable dejection and the blackness of horror and despair. While the spirit is erect and firm, the greatest troubles may be endured; but this being once wounded and broken down, the supports are fallen, a desolation of all the mental and animal powers succeeds, and the man is overwhelmed, as it were, in his own ruins. Nervous disorders in their extreme degree are the most deplorable, and without comparison the most dreadful to suffer, of all the miseries that attack the human frame in this vale of tears and sorrow. But what adds to their wretchedness is, that this extreme dejection of spirits, this melancholy, this lunacy and propensity to suicide, like many other disorders, is not confined to the unhappy object in the first instance, but by attacking successive generations of the same family proves itself to be hereditary. But as our island is remarkable for these nervous disorders which are emphatically [v] styled the "English malady," and for a frequency of

[v] "The title I have chosen for this treatise is a reproach universally thrown on this island by foreigners and all our neighbours on the continent, by whom nervous distempers, spleen, vapours, and lowness of spirits, are in derision called the "English malady." And I wish there were not so good grounds for this reflection. The moisture of our air, the variability of our weather (from our situation amid the ocean) the rankness and fertility of our soil, the richness and heaviness of our food, the wealth and abundance of the inhabitants (from their universal trade) the inactivity and sedentary occupations of the better sort (among whom this evil mostly rages) and the humour of living in great populous, and consequently unhealthy towns,—have brought forth a class and set of distempers with atrocious and frightful symptoms, scarce known to our ancestors, and never rising to such fatal heights

nor

of despondency and lunacy arising from them, no wonder that it is also noted

nor afflicting such numbers in any other known nation. These nervous disorders being computed to make almost "one third" of the complaints of the people of condition in England."—CHEYNE'S Preface to his *English Malady*.

"All diseases have in some degree or other, or in embryo, been extant at all times, at least might have been, if the efficient causes, "idleness and luxury," had been sufficiently set to work, which were chiefly in the power of men themselves. What we call nervous distempers were certainly in some small degree known and observed by the Greek, Roman, and Arabian physicians, though not such a number of them as now, nor with so high symptoms, so as to be so particularly taken notice of, except those called "hysterical," which seem to have been known in Greece, from whence they have derived their name. But as they were probably a stronger people and lived in a warmer climate, the slow, cold, and nervous diseases were less known and observed; the distempers of all the eastern and southern countries being mostly "acute." When these general causes, which I have mentioned, came to exist in some more considerable degree, and to operate in the more northern climes, then these nervous disorders began to show themselves more eminently, and to appear with higher, more numerous, and atrocious symptoms. Sydenham our countryman was the physician of note, who made the most particular and full observations on them, and established them into a particular class and tribe, with a proper, though different, method of cure from other chronic and humorous distempers; though their true nature, cause, and cure has been less universally laboured and known, than that of most other diseases; so that those, who could give no tolerable account of them, have called them vapours, spleen, stasis, nervous, hysterical, and hypochondriacal distempers."—CHEYNE'S *English Malady*, P. I. C. vi.

The following is a poetical description of this kind of low-spiritedness or melancholy, from Cowper's *Poems*, Vol. I.—Retirement.

"Virtuous and faithful Heberden, whose skill
Attempts no task it cannot well fulfil;
Gives "melancholy" up to nature's care,
And sends the patient into purer air.
Look where he comes—in this embower'd alcove
Stand close conceal'd, and see a statue move:
Lips busy and eyes fixt, foot falling slow,
Arms hanging idly down, hands clasp'd below,
Interpret to the marking eye, distress,
Such as its symptoms can alone express.
That tongue is silent now, that silent tongue
Could argue once, could jest or join the song;
Could give advice, could censure or commend,
Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend.
Renounc'd alike its office and its sport,
Its brisker and its graver strains fall short:
Both fail beneath a fever's secret sway,
And like a summer-brook are past away.

B b b

This

noted for an abundance of suicide proceeding from these melancholic [x] causes.

The foregoing may be deemed "physical" causes of suicide in England, which exert their influence over the mind by first disordering the body. There are

This is a fight for pity to peruse,
Till she resemble faintly what she views;
Till sympathy contract a kindred pain
Pierc'd with the woes that she laments in vain.
This of all maladies that man infest
Claims most compassion and receives the least.

'Tis not, as heads that never ach suppose,
Forgery of fancy and a dream of woes:
Man is an harp, whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony dispos'd aright.
The screws revers'd (a task which if He please,
God in a moment executes with ease)
Ten thousand strings at once go loose,
Loft, till He tune them, all their power and use.

No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels,
No cure for such, till God, who makes them, heals."

[x] "We do not find, that the Romans ever killed themselves without a cause; but the English destroy themselves most unaccountably. They destroy themselves often in the very bosom of happiness. This action among the Romans was the effect of education; it was connected with their principles and customs; among the English it is the effect of a distemper. It may be complicated with the scurvy, which in some countries, especially renders a man whimsical and unsupportable to himself. (See Pirard's Voyages, P. II. C. xxi.) It is connected with the physical state of the machine, and independent of every other cause. In all probability it is a defect of the filtration of the nervous juices; the machine, whose motive faculties are every moment without action, is weary of itself: the soul feels no pain, but a certain uneasiness in existing. Pain is a local thing, which leads us to the desire of seeing an end of it: the burden of life is an evil confined to no particular place, which prompts us to the desire of ceasing to live. It is evident, that the civil laws of some countries may have reasons for branding suicide with infamy, but in England it cannot be punished without punishing the effects of madness."—MONTESQUIEU, *Spir. Laws*, B. XIV. C. xii.

Montesquieu however in his conclusion here speaks too generally. What he says must be confined to that particular kind of suicide, which proceeds from melancholy and excess of nervous dejection producing lunacy to a certain degree; and this in fact is not punished by English law. But when it arises in England from other causes, it is and ought to be liable to censure and punishment in England as well as elsewhere.

others also arising from certain qualities in an Englishman's character, which prompt him to take frequent refuge, as he deems it, in the arms of death. How far these peculiarities of character ultimately depend on any or all of the aforementioned causes, it is needless, as well as difficult, precisely to determine: it is sufficient to bring them forward as actual and efficient causes of frequent self-violence. Contrary as the terms may seem, yet there is a degree both of "firmness and fickleness" in the temper of our countrymen, which often impels them to the same extreme:—a firmness (nearly bordering on obstinacy) by which they will not easily suffer themselves to be put out of their own ways by others;—a fickleness, by which they are as constantly growing tired of their own pursuits, when left to themselves. By the former disposition (which is a remnant of that fierceness, which constituted the basis of their ancient character) they are backward to hear [y] advice, or to retract a resolution they have once taken, even though it should appear to have been founded in precipitation and rashness. They are ready to go all lengths in its execution; they despise death in comparison of their point in view, and frequently destroy themselves rather than yield a point of love, of ambition, of honour, of fame, to another. Whilst on the other hand, by a certain frowardness and inconstancy when left to themselves, an impatience even in the possession of their own desires, they seem not capable of enjoying their own pursuits, or of bearing their own good fortune long, but complain of weariness and unhappiness in the midst of the most apparent causes of bliss, depreciate the value of those blessings they possess, and swell light and frivolous disappointments into important evils. Thus they seem to take pains, not only to suffer themselves, but to demonstrate their sufferings to

[y] The following extracts are from Muralt's Letters on the English and French Nations. Ed. 2. 1726. "There is still another proof (says he) that the English are not so changeable, as it is imagined,—which is, because advice has no effect upon them, after they have taken a resolution; which they often do rashly and execute in the same manner. This appears by the great number of people that kill themselves. It is easy to discover in all these things some little remains of fierceness, which is the basis of their ancient character. They retain something from different nations that have conquered them. They drink like Saxons; love hunting like Danes; the Normans left them chicanery and false witness, and the Romans their inclination for bloody shows and contempt of death,—if you would not rather consider the two last as the natural effects of their constitutions." (Let. i.) "Frequent excesses (he speaks both of women and wine) contribute no doubt to make the English melancholy and passionate." (Let. ii.) "When Englishmen are really in love (he says) it is with great passion; not a weakness to be ashamed of, but an affair of seriousness and importance, and the design is very often either to succeed or to part with reason or life." (Let. iii.)

others; and the greatest pleasure they have, seems to be, in dwelling on [z] the magnitude of their own misery.—Yet did it go no further, and were their complaints confined to mere words and imagination, the consequences would not be so terrible: but such unhappy tempers too frequently give a substance (as it were) to their shadowy sorrows, by the destruction of themselves in the midst of many comforts and sources of happiness; which however cease to be so to those, who are under the influence of relaxed nerves and disturbed imaginations. In cases like these suicide seems to indulge itself equally amid the wantonness of prosperity, as well as in some others in the desperation of adversity [A].

To

[z] “Many (speaking of the English), who have no desire of pleasing, abandon themselves to their own particular humour; most of those, who have wit and ingenuity, are ingenious in tormenting themselves; filled with a contempt or disgust for all things, they are unhappy amidst all the blessings that can possibly contribute to their happiness.”—MONTESQUIEU, *Spirit of Laws*, Vol. I. p. 450.

[A] The following case of a Col. Mordaunt is mentioned by Voltaire (in “*Melanges de Littérature*,” &c. Vol. IV. Oët.) and perhaps most readers will be able to adduce similar instances, which have happened within their own knowledge. “Colonel Philip Mordaunt, nearly related to the famous Earl of Peterborough, was a young man of quality, of about twenty-seven years of age; he was handsome and well made; his birth and genius gave him room to expect the greatest advantages. He had placed all his happiness in a mistress, by whom he was passionately beloved. Yet under these circumstances he took a sudden distaste to life, wrote several letters to his friends to bid them farewell and composed some verses. In his verses he declares his resolution to die by his own hands, and says, “that opium may be serviceable to the wife on such occasions, but that in his opinion a brace of balls “and resolution were much better.” In one of his letters he has these expressions. “Life has given me the head-ach, and I want a good church-yard sleep to set me right.”—Accordingly he shot himself, for no other reason, but that his soul was tired of his body, and he thought, when a man was weary of his lodging, it was time for him to leave it. He seemed to choose death, only because he had no longer a relish for his happiness.”

Very opposite to the above was the case of the following suicide, whose name and connexions were unknown; but who was found dead in his chamber at an inn in Kent a few years ago, with the following paper lying beside him.

“Lost to the world, and by the world forsaken,
A wretched creature;
Who groaned under a weary life
Upwards of thirty years, without knowing
One happy hour.
And all
In consequence of one single error,

Committed

To whatever cause, or rather combination of causes it is to be assigned, yet the effect is generally acknowledged, that the English are very remarkable for their want of composure and equanimity of temper under any sudden change of circumstances;—that instead of exercising that true wisdom and fortitude, which indulges itself in no extreme, they exult in transport over good fortune, by which they disable themselves from bearing its reverse with patience; and they aid the malice of ill-fortune by an [B] extraordinary dejection under its stroke. In short they are easily elated and as easily depressed; they are eager in the pursuit of any scheme, which they voluntarily undertake and warm in their notions of the happiness it is to administer; they enjoy it “violently” for a time [c], and then

Committed in early days;
 Though highly venial,
 As being the mere effect of juvenile folly,
 And soon repented of.
 But alas!
 The poor prodigal
 Had no kind father that would take him home,
 And welcome back his sad repentant virtue
 With fond forgiveness and the fatted calf.
 Here
 He sinks beneath his mighty load of ills,
 And with
 His miserable being lays them down,
 Heart-broken,
 At the age of fifty.
 Tender reader, give him a little earth
 For charity.

[B] In public concerns this national character is very evident in time of war. On the news of a victory arriving we are all joy and exultation, and think of nothing but final conquest and the extermination of hostile powers: on the news of a defeat, we are all chagrin and dejection; the generals or the ministry are execrated, and the nation is ruined: when perhaps in truth more sober-minded judges are of opinion, that neither the victory nor the defeat were of any important consequence towards a final adjustment of affairs on a firm basis. The same character also insinuates itself into social and personal concerns; and therefore furnishes a perpetual source of disappointment.

[c] “The English are a nation so distempered by the climate, as to have a disrelish of every thing, nay even of life. This nation has likewise derived from the climate a certain character of impatience, which renders them incapable of bearing the same train of things for any long continuance. This character of impatience is not very considerable of itself, but it may become so when joined with courage.

then it sinks in their estimation (however truly valuable) and its satisfactions become irksome and tedious. They scarce know how to pursue with temper or to enjoy with temper; but excessive in both they become disappointed in both; and then deviating into the opposite extreme, they as little know how to suffer with temper: and thus all is apt to conclude in vexation, despair, and suicide.

It is further observable, that the English are remarkable beyond most nations for a certain listlessness and weariness of themselves, which is productive of much uneasiness and misery to the patient, and which, if suffered to continue long, debilitates the animal economy, deranges the mental powers, and preys on the spirits, till at length it produces that *tædium vitæ*, which so frequently terminates in self-destruction. The *Ennui* [D], as it is called, is the offspring of pure idleness, or the having no employment whatever to fill up the passing hours. This want of employment is like a wen that oppresses and loads the body, or a canker that corrodes the springs of health and strength. Idleness is

courage. It is quite a different thing from levity, which makes people undertake or drop a project without cause; it borders most upon obstinacy, because it proceeds from so lively a sense of misery, that it is not weakened even by the habit of suffering."—MONTESQUIEU, *Spirit of Laws*, B. XIV. C. xiii.

[D] The reader will not be displeased with the following poetical description of the birth of *Ennui*.

—————" Within that ample nich
 With every quaint device of splendor rich,
 Yon phantom, who, from vulgar eyes withdrawn,
 Appears to stretch in one eternal yawn:
 Of empire here he holds the tottering helm,
 Prime minister in spleen's discordant realm;
 The pillar of her spreading state, and more,
 Her darling offspring, whom on earth she bore.
 For as on earth his wayward mother stray'd,
 Grandeur with eyes of fire her form survey'd,
 And with strong passion starting from his throne,
 Unloos'd the sullen queen's reluctant zone.
 From his embrace, conceiv'd in moody joy,
 Rose the round image of a bloated boy:
 His nurse was Indolence; his tutor Pomp,
 Who kept the child from every childish romp;
 They rear'd their nursling to the bulk you see,
 And his proud parents call'd their imp—*Ennui*."

HAYLEY's *Triumphs of Temper*.

- a stagnant

a stagnant pool, which is gradually filled with filth and noxious vapours; whilst activity, like a clear, running stream, removes obstructions, purifies as it flows, and freshens and invigorates through all its [E] channels. The busy of every description, whose attention is fixed on any pursuit, whether it be of ambition, wealth, fame, knowledge, or daily support, are totally exempt from this dreadful malady and all its fatal effects. We hear not of kings, or statesmen, or merchants, or mechanics, or daily-labourers, or any of those, who are constantly and busily employed in any course of useful improvement to themselves or others, being consumed with vapours, spleen, and melancholy: their time is too much taken up and their thoughts engrossed by their respective pursuits, to give leisure for long fits of idleness and ennui. But this complaint is chiefly to be found, either among those, who having amassed a competency or good fortune in the paths of industry, or having been formerly engaged in busy scenes and active professions, suddenly retire from the crowd and bustle of life to pass their days in quiet and privacy, without having any intellectual resources of employment and happiness within themselves; or among those [F], who being born in the lap

[E] "An idler is a watch, that wants both hands,
As useless if it goes, as if it stands."——COWPER.

[F] Dr. Moore endeavours to account for this extraordinary degree of ennui in the English character, in a letter too long to quote entire, but of which the following is the substance. He seems to think "That the excessive wealth of certain individuals, and the state of society in our capital, are the causes of our having a greater share of that malady among us than our neighbours on the continent. That a greater number of young men in England than in other countries, come to the possession of large fortunes without a fixt or determined taste for any pursuit whatever, to serve as a resource and occupation through life. That a full and uncontrolled command of money coming upon a young mind supposed to be totally unambitious and devoid of taste for any laudable pursuit, usually leads its possessor into every species of abandoned pleasure; neither is there room nor inclination afterwards to acquire such taste or accomplishments, as might inform the mind and fill up the succeeding tedious intervals in such a person's life. That such an one is prone to excess of every kind, till his appetite even for pleasure is palled, his sensibility blunted, and what is desired by him to-day, is loathed to-morrow. That new pleasures are sought, which seem desirable at a distance, but when present, become indifferent, if not disgustful. The agitations of gaming are also tried to prevent the stagnation of indolence. As age advances, caprice, tedium, peevishness, augment. The scene is often changed, but the same fretful piece is constantly acted, till the curtain is dropped, or pulled down by the impatiency of the actor himself, before the natural end of the drama. That this does not happen "so often" in France or Germany (he says) may be thus accounted for. Because in France a very small proportion of their young men (when compared with ours) come into the uncontrolled possession of great fortunes; and consequently they have not the means of gratifying every idle caprice. That instead of frequenting clubs and

lap of good fortune, have never taken any pains to cultivate their understanding or to improve their talents; and who, being at the same time unambitious of public fame, and unaspiring to distinctions of any kind, have nothing to do, but to go through the same round of unmanly and effeminate pleasures, which however they may fascinate for a season, yet at length grow insipid and tiresome. These have nothing to do, but to pursue the same dull course of eating, drinking and sleeping from day to day and from year to year. Many [G] there are in these stagnating situations, to whom life itself, after a few years seems actually a burden; who rise in the morning and say, when will it be noon? who, when noon arrives, are as anxious for evening and the time of going to rest;—to rest from what?—from the fatigues and labours of the day?—Yes truly; for to them it has been [H] wearisome and tedious in the extreme; and they have been heartily

and taverns with people of their own age (as usual in England), the young nobility and gentry of France generally spend their evenings in private families, or in those societies of both sexes to which they have the entrée. Hence decorum of conversation and manners is necessary, and hence they must study the art of making themselves agreeable. How much preferable is this to the licentiousness of a tavern-evening, which renders a young man unfit for, as well as undesirous of, all better society. It is also of singular use to a young man to live thus among a sort of company, to whom he must pay a respectful attention, where he must be on his guard as to propriety of conduct, and from whose experience he may receive so much profit. He must also on these occasions practise and habituate himself to much self-denial, and relinquish many indulgencies, which only lead to indolence and languor.—Even if they have no superior pursuits in the ways of ambition, knowledge, &c. yet the very politeness of the French (or desire of pleasing) is a great preservative against “languor;” as it keeps their attention alive to “other” objects, and takes it off from “themselves.”—That as to the Germans, there are very few men of great, independent fortunes among them. The younger brothers of the German princes and the middling gentry are almost all brought up to be soldiers, and consequently in strict attention to military discipline.”——*Travels through France, &c.* Vol. II. p. 321.

[G] Est enim ad moriendum inconsulta animi inclinatio, quæ sæpe ignavos viros jacentesque corripit; hi gravantur vitam. Quosdam subit eadem faciendi videndique satietas, & vitæ non odium, sed fastidium, in quod prolabimur cum dicimus—“Quousque eadem?” Nempe expergiscar, dormiam, fatiabor, esuriam, albebo, æstuabo; nullius rei finis est, sed in orbem nexa sunt omnia, fugiunt & sequuntur: diem nox premit, dies noctem; æstas in autumnum definit, autumnus hyems instat, quæ vere compefcitur. Omnia transeunt, ut revertantur. Nihil novi video, nihil novi facio. Fit aliquando & hujus rei nausea.—(SEN. Ep. xxiv.)

Non horam tecum esse potes, non otia recte

Ponere; teque ipsum vitas fugitivus & erro:

Jam vino quærens, jam somno fallere curam

Frustra; nam “comes atra” premit sequiturque fugacem.—HOR.

[H] “A mind quite vacant, is a mind distressed.”—COWPER.

tired

tired of the slow and heavy motion of the passing hours. Such then are cloyed with a satiety of life; they see nothing new, they do nothing new; they neither increase their small stock of knowledge nor swell the list of their good actions; life is superfluous, a toil, a burden; and if activity enough remain to summon up resolution, they frequently proceed to rid themselves of its incumbrance.

Another cause of frequent suicide is supposed to arise from that undauntedness of spirit, and high contempt of death, which fills the breast of an Englishman [1], and by which he meets his end on so many occasions with so much courage and resolution. But however courageous he may be of hazarding his life on all laudable occasions, yet when this magnanimity and greatness of soul is supposed to be exerted on the needless slaughter of himself, the bloody deed in truth proceeds rather from a mixture of melancholy and ferocity than [κ] of true spirit and firmness; by the former of which he is found to sink under the reverses of fortune, and by the latter to evade its attacks by raising a cruel spirit of murder against himself: and the combination of these two qualities favouring more of weakness than true courage, has little to do with a contempt of death, being only founded on a resolution to fly from present uneasiness.

Another cause of suicide arises from a great refinement of principle and a quickness of sensibility for which the English are remarkable. An Englishman

[1] Muralt in his Letters on the English and French Nations mentions the contempt of death shewn by the English and says, "They die by their own hands with as much indifference as by another's. It is common to hear people talk of men and women, who make away with themselves, and for reasons that would appear to us as trifles:—the men for the women, and vice versa. Last year in the space of fifteen days, three girls hanged themselves for some uneasiness in their amours; and the people that told me of it, did not seem so much concerned at the thing as that two of them should do it for the sake of Irishmen, whom they despise much and look upon as incapable of love. A young man shot himself in his father's presence, who refused him money. A man of figure, to vex his wife, with whom he was displeased, and knowing her to be covetous, said he would play her a trick; which trick was to go and hang himself; thinking by that to have his estates forfeited. Hanging it seems was formerly much in fashion, but now cutting of throats is more modish. A Frenchman who had lived long in England, and thought he was English in every article, resolved, in a fit of chagrin, to cut his throat. He applied the razor, but being frightened at the sight of his own blood, sent away for surgeons. The English laughed at him; for they go roundly to work on such occasions and never retreat. An old lord not long since endeavoured to cut his throat, but being prevented by his servants, he thrust his hands into the wound and tore it open."—(Let. iii.)

[κ] See supposed courage in suicide treated of in Part I. C. iv.

is apt to carry even his virtues to excess; and from thence to fall into extremes and dilemmas, from which he sees no extrication but in the remedy which despair suggests. He is actuated by an extravagant sense [L] of honour; and in consequence thereof, when he has been tricked out of his fortunes by some wily gamester, he delivers up his all, as a debt of honour, and rather than bring a notorious sharper to condign punishment, plunges that sword into his own breast, which was so much better deserved by the despoiler of his fortunes. Exalted ideas of friendship occupy his soul; and after having ruined himself perhaps in behalf of some perfidious wretch, his eyes begin to open, he grows ashamed of his weakness, and discharges those contents of the pistol against his own head, which justice would have directed another way. Thus an Englishman imbibing such refinements of principle, as lead to false honour and false shame, more frequently vents his spleen or his rage on himself than on another. His extreme sensibility also makes him liable to receive all impressions, and his natural gravity of temper confirms their strong hold. An Englishman thinks much, refines much, and consequently feels deeply. Hence instead of striving against the stream of misfortune, disappointment, and trouble, he easily suffers himself to be carried down the current. By refinement of principle he often anticipates the arrival of evil, and by a fastidious delicacy of sentiment plants imaginary thorns in his own breast. He broods over care and sorrow with a fostering warmth, till an ill-boding progeny is hatched in his brain under the mis-shapen forms of spleen and melancholy, of despondency and suicide.

It is irksome in a land so jealous of its liberty to hazard the assertion, but with all due deference to that truly venerable name, it must be advanced, that the great freedom of our constitution [M] and the excess of our civil liberty seems to be one source of our want of equanimity, of our natural impatience and restlessness, and of much consequent suicide. The assertion may be deemed bold by some, and be moreover liable to misconstruction; but it is neither altogether new nor void of proof. The greatness of our religious toleration seems

[L] See more on this subject in Part I. C. iv.

[M] It is remarkable, that the two countries, England and Geneva, which are most famous for their constitutional liberty, should also be most famous for an excess of suicide among them.

to make us impatient under the restraint of any religion [N] at all;—the greatness of our political liberty makes us often murmur at those salutary and restrictive measures, which are absolutely necessary to secure all that is valuable in the possession of liberty itself. But this general impatience under all religious and civil restraint (arising from excessive freedom in both) is naturally extended by us into the concerns of social and domestic life; and we are as jealous of a seeming speck on our eye of private, as of public, liberty. For this reason, when good advice is given even to young persons, and by those, who have a natural authority over them, they are apt not so much to inquire into the “right or wrong” of what is pointed out to them; as into the infringement (as they call it) on their private freedom of will; and from hence they are apt to refuse all salutary submission. But in this they follow the example of their elders, who in every stage and business of life almost show an impatience of control even for their own advantage. This is an inconvenience to which that love of liberty and freedom, which is implanted in every Englishman’s breast from his very infancy, necessarily leads; neither can it be wondered, that it produces a restlessness under contradiction, disappointments and troubles in private, as well as public, life. Again; that spirit of freedom, which we imbibe from the constitution, sets us all as we imagine on a level; we submit therefore with impatience, we obey with impatience, and are impatient to see others only freemen like ourselves, rising to any pre-eminence of fame or fortune beyond us. Whereas the true equality or level between citizens of a free state consists in their being “all,” rich as well as poor, equally amenable to the laws. But it is apt to be often mistaken by those of high spirit and low fortune for that sort of equality, which levels all distinctions in outward appearance and mode of living: than which a more dangerous notion cannot prevail, or one that through all its train of evil consequences is more productive of suicide. For this pride of equality often

[N] Another great inconvenience arises from an excess of religious liberty; which is, that every one not only maintains in private, but preaches in public, whatever doctrines he pleases: and some carry this to such a pitch of wildness and extravagance, as does infinite mischief, especially among the lower ranks of people. Their heads are often filled with such dark and horrid notions of religion, and they are taught to consider the state of their souls in such a mournful and gloomy light, as at length actually drives them into melancholy and despair, and tempts them to commit depredations on their own lives. It has been asserted by some, (though the author does not pretend to vouch for its truth or falsehood on his own experience) that the journeys of some of these preachers of sad tidings have been traced by the vestiges of these dismal effects in the habitations of the poor.

renders us profuse beyond our abilities; and extravagance leads to confusion and ruin. Then follows vexation, disappointment, distraction or melancholy, till at length despair urges to the fatal blow, and the tragical scene closes with that action, which we have the "liberty," though not the "right" to execute on ourselves. From this impatience under restraint in all external and social matters, arising from his claim to liberty and freedom, the Englishman makes an easy transition to a like disquietude under his personal concerns. Disappointments and losses of all kinds sit heavy on his mind, and he is restless and fretful under bodily pains and sufferings. But his dejection of spirit aids the attacks of misfortune or illness, and increases the power of affliction over him. The equanimity of his mind is by these means totally destroyed, and when his spirits are fallen to a certain point of depression, the man becomes ready to execute on himself any dire and bloody sentence, which shall be dictated by his internal anguish and despair.

There is also a degree of whim, caprice, and originality often marking the execution of an Englishman's suicide, which, though it cannot be reckoned as a producing cause, is yet a strong trait of his peculiar turn of mind, when meditating self-murder; and which perhaps arises from that extreme degree of liberty to which in his actions he has always been accustomed. One would think, that when a person had once brought himself to a resolution of dying by his own hands, he would take the easiest and quickest method of accomplishing his purpose, without bestowing a thought on the attendant circumstances of his death or of the figure he should make "in" death. But this is not always the case. The choice of the manner, the time, the place, is not always so easy a matter, after the thing itself has been absolutely determined; and disappointment in a trifle of this sort has [o] often delayed, if not totally prevented the execution

[o] The following whimsical instance of indifference, as to the mode of suicide, is related in Sir John Hawkins's *History of the Science and Practice of Music*, Vol. V. 7. "One Jeremiah Clarke, Organist of St. Paul's, An. Dom. 1700, was at the house of a friend in the country, from whence he took an abrupt resolution of returning to London. His friend having observed marks of great dejection in his behaviour, and knowing him to be a man disappointed in love, furnished him not only with an horse, but servant to take care of him. A fit of melancholy seizing him on the road, he alighted and went into a field, in a corner whereof was a pond and also trees; where he began to debate with himself, whether he should then end his days by hanging or drowning. Not being able to resolve on either,

execution of the sentence. That there should be a kind of professional [P] mode of accomplishing suicide, which inclines one rather than another to the use of this or that means, may be easily conceived. Death is certainly least dreadful in that shape, in which one has been most accustomed to view it. A soldier will bravely face the mouth of a cannon; who may be terrified at the fever's burning heat; and he, who patiently expects death on the bed of pain and sickness, trembles perhaps at the explosion of a little gunpowder. The latter then, if ever inclined to suicide, would be as little likely to shoot himself through the head, as the former would be to have recourse to the envenomed draught. It is certainly true, that most classes, and professions of men have a favourite method of despatching themselves. The brave and those of high birth are accustomed to do it by the sword or pistol; those of middling or lower rank by the more ignoble rope, razor or deadly potion, and despairing lovers

either, he thought of making what he looked on as chance, the umpire. He tossed a piece of money into the air, which came down on its edge and stuck in the clay. Though the determination answered not his wishes, it was far from ambiguous, as it seemed to forbid both methods of destruction; and would have given unspeakable comfort to a mind less disordered than his. Being thus interrupted in his purpose, he returned, and mounting his horse rode on to London, where in a short time after he shot himself."

[P] Suicide at Geneva, being very similar in many points to what it is in England, forms an apology for introducing the following strong professional mode of its execution in Geneva, whereby a blacksmith contrived to make his bellows subservient to his purpose. "A blacksmith charged an old gun-barrel with a brace of bullets, and putting one end into the fire of his forge, tied a string to the handle of his bellows, by pulling of which he could make them play whilst he was at a convenient distance. Kneeling down he then placed his head near the mouth of the barrel, and moving the bellows by means of the string, they blew up the fire, he keeping his head with astonishing firmness and horrible deliberation in that position, till the further end of the barrel was so heated as to kindle the powder, whose explosion instantly drove the bullets through his brain. Though I know this happened literally as I have related it, yet there is something so extraordinary and almost incredible in the circumstances, that perhaps I should not have mentioned it, had it not been well-attested and known to the inhabitants of Geneva and to all the English there."—Dr. MOORE'S Travels through France; &c. Vol. I. Let. xxxii.

The author was told of a surgeon, who following up his professional ideas killed himself (some years ago) by means of an instrument, which he had himself invented for dilating of wounds. This instrument (trusting to his anatomical skill) he intruded into his own body, till it wounded his liver; and then he told his friends, it was out of their power to recover him:—he died in a few days.

in their own purling [Q] stream: but if deprived of their respective ways, they find a backwardness in adopting any other. In all this there is nothing extraordinary, as we naturally look on those instruments of death with least horror and surprize, to which we have been most accustomed. But when a man is solicitous about the temper of the steel or the hilt of that sword, which is to pierce through his heart; when he examines with precise and cautious eye the length, the bore, the mounting of that pistol, which is destined to perforate his skull; when he covets a particular kind of powder, which is to explode without noise; when he nicely calculates [R] the quantity, that will serve at any

[Q] "From the days of Plato to our own (says the writer of the "Connoisseur") a suicide has always been compared to a soldier on guard deserting his post: but I should rather consider a set of these desperate men, who rush on certain death, as a body of troops sent out on the forlorn hope. They meet every face of death, however horrible, with the utmost resolution. Some blow their brains out with a pistol; some expire, like Socrates, by poison; some fall, like Cato, on the points of their own swords; and others, who have lived like Nero, affect to die like Seneca, and bleed to death. The poor sneaking wretch, starving in a garret, tucks himself up in his list garters; a second crossed in love, drowns himself, like a blind puppy, in Rosamond's pond, and a third cuts his throat with his own razor. But the man of fashion almost always dies by a pistol, and even the cobbler of any spirit goes off by a dose or two extraordinary of gin."

The author of the "World" also (Vol. IV. N^o 193) makes an humorous proposal for the erection of a large building to be called "The Receptacle for Suicides;" where every one may kill himself in his own way. "I have (says he) a most effectual machine for the easy decapitation of such, as choose that noble and honourable exit. I have a commodious bath for disappointed ladies, fed by the clearest streams, where the patient may drown with the utmost privacy and elegance. I have pistols for gamesters, which (instead of bullets and slugs) are charged with loaded dice; so that they may put an end to their existence by the very means that supported it. I have daggers and poison for distressed actors, and swords fixt obliquely on the floor with their points upwards for the gentlemen of the army. For attorneys, tradesmen and mechanics, who have no taste for genteeler exits, I have a long room, in which a range of halters are fastened to a beam with their nooses ready tied. I have also an handsome garden for the entombing all my good customers, and lastly I propose agreeing with a coroner by the year, to bring in such verdicts as I shall think proper. I only claim the "heads" as my own fee, that by frequent dissections of the brain, I may at last discover and remedy the cause of so unnatural a propensity."

[R] Suicides have been known to busy themselves in these calculations. The folly of them is ridiculed with humour in the following extract from the Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. XXV. Year 1755.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

"Whereas many noblemen, gentlemen and others, who in the polite world are distinguished by the name of "Men of Pleasure," have by fast living (now commonly called "Sporting," formerly stigmatized by the names of "whoring and drunkenness") brought upon themselves at the age of forty,
all

any given distance to penetrate without scattering the brain; when the day, the hour is long fixed with much attendant ceremony and solemnity; when these and many other like [s] minutiae are previously laid down with precision and

all the pains, aches, and infirmities of fourscore; and others by fashionably spending their whole fortunes, by contracting debts, which they cannot pay, and ruining their wives, wards, children, and creditors, have incurred such reflections, as render life intolerable: And whereas it has been proved by the late Lord Bolingbroke and others, to the full satisfaction of all gentlemen of wit, humour, men of pleasure and sports, that after this life there is nothing to hope or fear; so that to put an end to it in such circumstances is greatly for the advantage of themselves and the community: And whereas such is the prejudice still remaining among the great and little vulgar, that this necessary and heroic act reflects indelible dishonour upon such men of wit, humour, and pleasure, and also on their families, and makes the expence of bribing a coroner's jury to perjury absolutely necessary to prevent a forfeiture of their personal estate, if any such there be: And whereas there is at present no known method by which this necessary measure may be "decently and privately" executed—the razor, sword and halter having been universally exploded,—and the effect of the pistol, as it is commonly used, being very uncertain, sometimes causing a great effusion of blood, sometimes blowing the brains about the room, spoiling the paintings and other furniture, and leaving the body bloody and mangled, the countenance distorted, and the features defaced; and at the same time alarming not only the family, but the neighbourhood; so that all attempts to conceal it by pretending apoplexy or sudden death are ineffectual:—"Notice" is hereby given, that a gentleman of great study and experience by sea and land, as well in England as in foreign parts, has discovered and obtained the king's patent for the following remedies "Against Life." First;—his "White Powder," which throws a bullet from any fire-arm without noise, and yet with the same force as that commonly used; and which, by being mixed with a certain chemical compound, may be regulated to any degree of strength, according to the thickness of the skull, so as to pass through the ear or the roof of the mouth and lodge in the brain, without fracturing any part of the bone behind, or leaving any appearance of a wound. Secondly;—his incomparable "Laurel-water," which produces its effect even whilst it is going down the throat, without noise, agony or convulsion. Thirdly;—his inestimable "Chemical Spirit," invidiously called by Dr. Mead, the Stygian Spirit, from its subtil, imperceptible and effectual influence on life; a small vial of which may be so held by a person in the midst of a large circle of company, as instantly to kill him, without affecting any other. The author, upon a line post-paid, will attend and administer these remedies himself to any nobleman, gentleman, or other man of wit, humour, or pleasure, who may think fit to honour him with his commands, provided a sufficient indemnity be given, and the gentleman has not courage to apply them himself: or they will be delivered, with a printed paper of directions, to any who shall ask for a dose of the Anodyne-powder, Drops, or Essence, at the Gentlewoman's, the Two-Blue-Posts in Frith-street, Soho, and no where else in England;—at the price of One Guinea, which is nothing to the value of the cure."

N. B. The above advertisement is ascribed to Dr. Johnson.

[s] Sophocles has put a reflection into the mouth of Ajax, when about to kill himself, against these adjusters of trifles. "My destroying sword (says he) is now pointed in the fittest manner to penetrate—" if there be indifference and leisure enough at such a moment as this, to consider, how it is pointed."—See Ajax Flagellifer.

caution,

caution, it seems to argue a joint mixture of whim and caprice, of calmness and [r] composure, even in the midst of the impatience and horror of self-murder.

We have now taken a review of such peculiarities in an Englishman's situation and character, as tend to destroy his equanimity of temper, and to depress his spirits towards the point of melancholy; and which in consequence contribute their influence towards familiarising the idea of suicide to his mind.—These have been found to arise from climate, diet, fuel; all tending under certain circumstances to debilitate the animal economy, to produce nervous affections, lowness of spirits, melancholy and lunacy. These are “physical” causes, and as far as they act “necessarily” upon a man, and their force is not increased through his own indiscretion and folly, he is more deserving of pity than blame for their unhappy effects. For that species of suicide must be censured with caution, which appears to have been accomplished in a melancholy arising from nervous imbecility; because in such a case there must be supposed to be such a dereliction or failure of the mental powers, as is equivalent to a certain degree of lunacy, if not actually producing it.

Another set of causes productive of much suicide in this island appear to have their origin both in the firmness and fickleness of its inhabitants as explained above; in their impatience even under a continuance of good, as well as bad fortune; in their neither “enjoying” nor “suffering” with moderation and temper; in that degree of ennui producing a *tædium vitæ*, for which the English are remarkable; in that contempt of death for which they are celebrated by foreigners; in that great refinement of principle and quickness of sensibility, which characterises their manners; and in their great degree of constitutional liberty, which makes them impatient and restless under all restraint and uneasiness, whether of a public or private nature.—As far as these (as well as the physical) causes exist in a greater degree among us than other nations, so far have we more frequent incitements to suicide unknown to them; and so far, we may always appear to them to exceed in that crime. For a crime it is when committed on any of these latter set of causes; since we ought not to be

[r] See how this coolness and composure is brought as an argument in favour of the “propriety” of suicide, and how it is answered in Chap. of Remarks on Von Arenswald's Letters.

influenced

influenced, by them to the commission of what is wrong; having it in our power by the aid of our understanding and judgment, of our reason and religion, to correct their excess and pernicious tendency. But though other nations can boast no superior merit in not committing that to which they have no temptation, or in resisting what they do not feel; yet "we" are not therefore the more excusable in yielding to such temptations as we might resist, would we be but early enough in our opposition to their growing influence; would we but use the "whole means" in our power.

However it is much to be doubted, whether all the causes abovementioned put together and exerting their greatest influence, would either produce suicide in such abundance, as to occasion a notoriety of its commission, or at least in such a degree of criminality, as to render it heinous and detestable. But the "abomination" of self-murder remains for that particular species of it, which flows from a total want of all serious principle; from an avowed system of free-thinking, infidelity, and licentiousness of manners; and with these it must be confessed to our shame and sorrow, that our island is most deeply tinctured: hence the notoriety, the abundance, and daily increase of this concluding scene of infamy and impiety [u].—It is well known that an excess of liberty produces

licen-

[u] "Blame not thy clime, nor chide the distant sun;
The sun is innocent, thy clime absolved:
Immortal climes kind nature never made.
The cause I sing in Eden might prevail,
And proves, it is thy folly, not thy fate.

The soul of man (let man in homage bow
Who names his soul) a native of the skies,
High-born and free, her freedom should maintain,
Unfold, unmortgag'd for earth's little bribes.
The illustrious stranger in this foreign land,
Like strangers, jealous of her dignity,
Studious of home and ardent to return;—
Of earth suspicious, earth's enchanted cup
With cool reserve-light touching, should indulge
On "immortality"—her godlike taste;
"There" take large draughts; make her chief banquet "there."

D d a

But

licentiousness; and that profligacy of manners and infidelity going hand in hand are so closely united, as to render it difficult in many cases to determine, which gives birth to the other:—but however that be, one point is certain, that they work together to one and the same end, and that is self-murder.—That such irreligious notions, as tend to ridicule the plain precepts of moral duty, as defy censure and scorn instruction (though of heavenly descent), as, casting off all ideas of a superintending Providence, all hopes of a future state, affect to act on such natural and philosophical principles, as encourage suicide;—that such scepticism and infidelity is encouraged in our writings and too generally prevails in our practice, is matter of notoriety, shame, and reproach.—The libertine of rank and fashion has too much refinement of taste and spirit ever to think about a “foul,” or an “hereafter;” while the infidel of middling station takes wonderful pains to persuade himself out of the necessity or existence of religious duties. He fosters confused and false notions of free-will and free-agency, which, without adverting to any principles of moral or religious obligation, he applies to a liberty of thinking and acting just as he pleases. If he entertains any idea at all of the existence of an Almighty Being and an over-ruling

But some reject this sustenance divine;
To beggarly, vile appetite descend;
Ask alms of earth for guests that come from heaven;
Sink into slaves, and sell for present hire
Their rich reversion; and (what shares its fate)
Their native freedom to the prince who sways
This nether world. And when his payments fail,
When his foul basket gorges them no more,
Or their pall'd palates loath the basket full,
Are instantly with wild demoniac rage
For breaking all the chains of Providence
And bursting their confinement; though fast barr'd
By laws divine and human; guarded strong
With horrors doubled to defend the pass,
The blackest, nature or dire guilt can raise;
And moated round with fathomless destruction,
Sure to receive and overwhelm them in their fall.
Such, Britons, is the cause, &c.

A sensual, unreflecting life is big
With monstrous births, and suicide, to crown
The black, infernal brood,” &c.—YOUNG, Night V.

Providence, it is only such an one, as leads him to charge that Providence with being the author of all his miseries and misfortunes: from whence he claims (as well as his unprincipled superior in life) the liberty of releasing himself from them at pleasure. But the spirit of irreligion and suicide descends still lower. For as the principles and manners of the great must necessarily influence those of more middling rank; so will the latter in their turn contribute their seeds of corruption to the lower orders. The same want of religious awe and reverence, the same carelessness with regard to the concerns of futurity has of late years wonderfully pervaded the lower orders of the community. Impatience and restlessness under every species of distress and difficulty has succeeded of course, and given birth to the practice of much self-murder among servants, day-labourers, and others of the meanest condition.—Whatever therefore becomes of the question, whether we exceed other nations in the practice of suicide from other motives, yet daily experience must convince us, that we fall not short of them in its perpetration from this worst of motives, “a want of religious principle.” Melancholic is the consideration, that there is scarce a publication of the day either in town or country, but what announces examples [x] of this sort, and shocks our senses with these self-murderous proceedings. How luxury tends to weaken the intellects and to deprave the manners;—how the refinements of indulgence create an impatience of suffering;—how when uncontrolled by principle and left to their own operations, they first weaken and then utterly vanquish the spirit of true honour, virtue and religion;—how when a dread of futurity is thus extinguished, the mind is easily convinced of the propriety of suicide and prepared for its commission—all these are points, which have been already discussed at large, and therefore need no repetition here. It now only remains to lament, that the theory of self-murder on these vicious principles is so powerfully exemplified in the practice; and what is still worse, that it wants not its cool, metaphysical, and sophistical defenders, on what they call philosophical principles, as well as its desperate and outrageous practitioners! that no regards for our country, friends, connexions or family;—no respect for the laws, no regard, no reverence for religion, is able to deter us

[x] The author could easily collect a string of the most remarkable suicides, which have happened of late years: but the task would be both painful and invidious. He desists therefore and leaves it to his reader to recollect and dwell on such instances, as his memory or perhaps his feelings for a friend or relative may suggest to him.

from this deadly sin; but that we scorn the threats of justice, disdain the claims of society, break through the ties of friendship and domestic union, despise virtue and defy the warnings of the Deity; in order to close the scene of a vicious and abandoned life in the outrage of self-murder. "O Britain [y] infamous for suicide," said a warm and enthusiastic poet. In this instance however he could scarce censure with too much zeal and severity:—infamous indeed in the number of its self-murders! infamous in their instigating cause—a want of all honest and virtuous and religious principle [z].

[y] "O Britain, infamous for suicide!

An island in thy manners! far disjoin'd

From the whole world of rationals beside!

In ambient waves plunge thy polluted head,

Wash the dire stain nor shock the continent."—YOUNG, Night V.

[z] The author of the "Connoisseur" exercises his vein of humour and just satire against criminal suicide in the following passage. "If this madness should continue to grow more and more epidemical, it will be expedient to have a bill of suicide, distinct from the common bill of mortality, brought in yearly: in which should be set down the number of suicides, their method of destroying themselves, and the likely causes of their so doing. In this I believe we should find but few martyrs to the weather. In the little sketch of a bill of suicide underneath, I have left blanks for the date of the year, as well as for the number of self-murderers, their manner of dying, &c. which would naturally be filled up by the proper persons, if ever this scheme should be put in execution.

A Bill of Suicide for the year—

Of Newmarket-Races,——	Of a Tour through France and Italy,——
Of kept Mistresses,——	Of Lord Bolingbroke, &c. &c.——
Of Electioneering,——	Of the Robin-Hood Society,——
Of Lotteries,——	Of an Equipage,——
Of Gambling,——	Of a Dog-kennel,——
Of French Wines, French Cooks, &c. &c.——	Of Covent-Garden,——
Of Chinese Temples,——	Of Plays, Operas, Concerts, Masquerades,
Of a Country-Seat,——	Routs, Drums, &c.——
Of a Town-House,——	Of keeping the best Company,——"
Of Fortune-hunting,——	

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS IN VOL. I.

The Reader is desired to insert the following Quotation among the Notes in Page 126.

“ There has been a foolish custom among several nations to bury with the dead, especially if it were a prince, their jewels, riches, food, and even their wives and slaves, as is practised now in India. Among the Natchez in Louisiana, the chief and the wife of the chief have always a certain number of persons, who are attached to them, and are called in their language “ Devoted.” They always attend them, are kept by them, and are their constant companions. The greatest of their misfortunes is, when their patron dies, for then they must lose their lives. They have no chance, but they must follow the custom. While the body of the deceased is exposed on a stone at the entry of the temple, a rope is passed round the neck of these unfortunate beings, which is held by the executioner. Thus disposed they begin a dance, which lasts for some time; after which the rope is pulled, and they are seen dancing till they can stand no longer, but fall down dead. But since the arrival of the French in this country, they have tried to abolish this custom.—In the island of Hispaniola Oviedo says, that at the death of the chiefs several persons of both sexes, particularly their wives, are buried alive with them, and indeed they are proud of that honour, because they think, they will accompany the dead in the fun. Lopez de Gomara affirms the same thing, which is confirmed by Peter Martyr, who says that at the death of the Cacique Behucio, his sister Anacaona ordered, that several of his wives should be buried alive; but some religious fathers (missionaries) being present, they begged so hard, that she contented herself at last with one only, who was very beautiful and wished to be the victim. This woman adorned herself with all her jewels, and took with her only one pitcher full of water and two loaves. But there are other nations among the savages, who, though they have the same opinions as the Heathens, are not however so cruel as to put to death individuals, for whom the nation ought to interest itself, rather than to increase the number of victims. They burn the dogs of the deceased, and sometimes one of his slaves; but on the day of burial no such cruelty is seen, as was practised among the ancients. The deceased has very little buried with him; his clothes, a few loaves, a comb, his arms, some colours to paint himself, and other trifles are all he carries with him into the next world.—To remain unburied is a cruel punishment and a mark of infamy among the Americans.”—Manners of the American Savages, by LAFITAU, 1724, 2 vols. quarto.—Vol. II. p. 386, &c.

The following Quotation is to be inserted among the Notes in Page 217.

“ The place to which souls go after this life according to the savages is divided into several parts, where they are not all treated alike or equally well. Such is the opinion of one of the fathers (missionaries) from what he heard of a young girl. This woman seeing her sister, who had taken a great quantity of hemlock in a fit of despair, and who had refused to check the violence of the poison, dying in great agonies, cried very much, and tried to soften her feelings by saying every tender thing she could think of.—“ What, said she, are you determined, that we should see one another no more?”—The father (missionary) struck at this asked her—“ Why, if she believed, that there was a place “ where we were all to meet together, she spoke thus to her sister, who was dying?”—“ It is true, “ answered she, that we shall all go to that country; but I am grieved, because the wicked, and those “ who have killed themselves, are punished there, and are separated from all the others.”—Thus do we see, that the savages can discern the good from the evil; and are of opinion, that vice will be punished and virtue rewarded.”—LAFITAU, Vol. I. P. 404.

The

• ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS IN VOL. I.

The following Quotation is to be inserted in the Notes Page 324, after
 "Westminster-Abbey."

What is hinted at above by the Author of the Connoisseur seems neither new nor applicable only to our own times, as Shakespeare bears witness.

1st Clown. Is she to be buried in-christian burial, that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

2d Clown. I tell thee she is; therefore make her grave straight: the crowner hath fate on her and finds it christian burial.

1st Clown. How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

2d Clown. Why, 'tis found so.

1st Clown. It must be "so offendendo," it cannot be else. For here lies the point; if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act; and an act has three branches: it is to act, to do, and to perform. Argal, she drown herself wittingly.

2d Clown. Nay but hear you, goodman Delver.

1st Clown. Give me leave; here lies the water, good: here stands the man, good:—if the man go to the water and drown himself, it is will he, nill he, he goes; mark you that: but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death, shorteneth not his own life.

2d Clown. But is this law?

1st Clown. Ay marry is it, crowner's quest-law.

2d Clown. Will you ha'the truth on't?—if this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried "out" of christian burial.

1st Clown. Why there thou sayest. And the more pity, that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than other christians."—HAMLET.

CORRECTIONS.

- In the List of Subscribers. For "Mrs. Hakewill" read "Mr. Hakewill."
 For "Rev. John Kenward Shaw" read "John Kennard Shaw."
- Page Line
- 2—24 add comma after "this."
 - 4—33 for Chap. ii, read iii.
 - 6—20 add "an" between on and action.
 - 10—25 omit "to."
 - 15—14 omit "s" in perturbations.
 - 20—11 add a period after "eyes."
 - 28—14 for "croud" read "crowd."
 - 33—15 for "of" read "to."
 - 54—15 add comma after "overcome."
 - 90—11 } for "dispatch" read "despatch."
 - 93—15 }
 - 94—1 } for "law" read "lawful."
 - 98—26 omit "to."
 - 100—3 for "dispatch" read "despatch."
 - 114—18 for uxores" read "uxoris."
 - 127—35 for "quatuor" read "quattuor."
 - 141—32 for "II," read "XL."
 - 146—29 for "Oalfodr" read "Valfodr."
 - 157—14 } add commas after { "antiquity,"
 - 15 } { "Socrates,"
 - 17 } { "Providence."
 - 158—27 } add commas after { "parents"
 - 28 } { "themselves."
 - 167—6 for "is" read "be."
 - 169—3 add comma after "placid."
 - 176—20 add comma after "children."
 - 177—15 for "or" (last word of the line) read "of."
 - 178—9 } add commas after { "friends,"
 - 10 } { "protection."
 - 179—2 add comma after "resolution."
 - 182—24 add comma after "short."
 - 184—33 add comma after "rational."
 - 186—18 add comma after "advantageous."
 - 187—2 add comma after "filial."
 - 191—1 add period after "born."
 - 20 add comma after "death."
 - 194—6 for "The lenient," &c. read thus. "They knew nothing of that lenient, reviving medicine, "future hope," and their only," &c.
 - 198—5 for "neca" read "Seneca."
 - 204—15 } add commas after { "family," and " friends."
 - 31 } { "encouraged."
 - 206—17 add comma after "Stoic."
 - 211—4 add comma after "conjugal."
 - 219—5 after "reported" add "by Plutarch."
 - 234—18 for "antiquam" read "antequam."
 - 240—4 for "humourous" read "humorous."
 - 241—15 for "publicly" read "publicly."
 - 243—23 for "humourously" read "humorously."
 - 244—21 for "publicly" read publicly."
 - 246—24 for "ut qui laqueo vitam finisset" read "ut qui laqueo vitam finisset."
 - 247—20 add comma after "criminal."
 - 24 for "impacta" read "impactæ."
 - 263—11 for "συνα τα" read "συντα."
 - 14 for "nihilo fecius. Dari solere" read "nihilo fecius "Dari solere."
 - 20 for Dari non folere read "Dari non folere."
 - 265—34 for "MONUMENTVM" read "MONVMENTVM."
 - 266—1 add comma after "suicide."

CORRECTIONS.

Page	Line	Instruction
267	20	add commas after "consequently" and "them."
270	9	add comma after "days."
271	13	add comma after "Cyprus."
276	21	for "There" read "I hear."
284	6	add comma after "suicide."
285	9	add comma after "extravagance."
288	35	for "gladius" read "gladii."
303	18	omit the second "its."
	23	for "communities" read "communities."
322	11	for "leading" read "lead," and for "concerning" read "concerns."
323	4	for "im lies" read "implies."
	25	for "of" read "against."
337	14	add comma after "truth."
339	12	add comma after "which."
	17	add comma after "truth."
345	23	add comma after "health."
348	31	add comma after "drink."
358	34	for "for" read "in."
359	6	add comma after "profligacy."
364	8	add comma after "impatience."
366	12	add comma after "vigour."
377	25	add comma after "thing."
378	1	omit the second "into."

